魔王なオレと不死姫（グール）の指輪

柑橘ゆすら
イラスト・しゅがすく

"I AM ZOMNI, THE ONE YOU CHOSE AS YOUR PARTNER."
Zonmi R. McKenzie
A PRETTY GHOUL THAT ARRIVED TO CHIHARU'S HOUSE BY EXPRESS HOME DELIVERY.
Undead Tribe@Ghoul
LV: 9
Physical Strength: A
Power: C
Speed: C
A VERY RESILIENT MONSTER.
PROFESSES A TOTAL OBEDIENCE TO ITS MASTER.
NOT VERY POPULAR.
Code 042

"OF COURSE HARU WILL CHOOSE ME, RIGHT?"
Kurose Kyouko
THE PROTAGONIST'S CHILDHOOD FRIEND, A GIANT FROM THE NEPHILIM TRIBE.
Giant tribe@Nephilim
LV: 5
Physical Strength: B
Power: A
Speed: C
A MONSTER POSSESSING INCREDIBLE STRENGTH.
CAN THROW A HEAVY TRUCK WITH A SINGLE HAND.
IF NOT CAREFUL, IT MIGHT SQUASH YOU FLAT.
Code 036

"EVEN IF I HAVE TO USE FORCE, I WILL MAKE A CONTRACT WITH YOU."

Iris Scarlet Lindwurm

DESCENDING FROM THE "STRONGEST BLOODLINE" A RED DRAGON GIRL

Dragon Tribe@Red Dragon **LV: 1**

Physical Strength: B
Power: B
Speed: A

AN ALL-ROUND MONSTER. CAN BREATHE OUT FIRE.

BE CAREFUL THAT IT DOESN'T BURN YOUR HOUSE.

Code 001

"... PLEASE, DON'T MAKE THAT FACE. I HAVEN'T LOST YET."
FEELING MY ANXIETY, ZONMI MUTTERED AS IF ADMONISHING ME.

第一話　悪夢のはじまり……009
第二話　私と契約するのです！……045
第三話　課せられた使命……085
第四話　ドラゴンブラッド……132
第五話　その覚悟……173
第六話　決戦のとき……197
エピローグ……238
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To ★ Kusumi Chiharu.
Congratulations. You have been selected to be the seventh Monster Tamer.
Please choose one of the demons from list below as your partner; remember to complete the duty everyday.

Dragon tribe: red dragon. **Level**: 1
Physical strength: B, **Power**: B, **Speed**: A

An all-round monster.
Can breathe out fire from the mouth.
Be careful that it doesn't burn your house.
Serial number: 001.

Giant tribe: Nephilim. **Level:** 5
Physical strength: B, **Power:** A, **Speed:** C

A monster with incredible strength.
Can even throw a heavy truck with a single hand.
If not careful, can squash you flat.
Serial number: 036

Undead tribe: Ghoul. **Level:** 9
Physical strength: A, **Power:** C, **Speed:** C

A very resilient monster.
Professes a total obedience to its master.
Not very popular.
Serial number: 042.

Maou na Ore to Fushihime no Yubiwa Volume 1

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Prologue

To: Kusumi Chiharu.

Congratulations. You have been selected to be part of the seventh generation of monster tamers.

Please choose one of the monsters from list below; you should remember that it will not only be your first partner, but will also help with your daily training, so please take good care of it.

Dragon tribe: red dragon. **Level**: 1
Physical strength: B, **Power**: B, **Speed**: A

An all-round monster.
Can breathe out fire from the mouth.
Be careful that it doesn't burn your house.
Serial number: 001.

Giant tribe: Nephilim. **Level:** 5
Physical strength: B, **Power:** A, **Speed:** C

A monster with incredible strength.
Can even throw a heavy truck with a single hand.
If not careful, can squash you flat.
Serial number: 036

Undead tribe: Ghoul. **Level:** 9
Physical strength: A, **Power:** C, **Speed:** C

A very resilient monster.
Professes a total obedience
to its master.
Not very popular.
Serial number: 042.

Though in truth, in my opinion, I feel you have the talent and grounding to become a 'demon king' in the future.

Having said that, Chiharu-sama, I wish you good luck from the bottom of my heart.

From: Luka (International Monster Association).

"Ding Ding"

Early in the morning, on a certain day.

My phone received an advertising mail.

Checking the contents, it ended up being a total load of bull.

Initially believing it to be a new type of scam, I was about to immediately press the "delete" button, but, for some reason, the message's format puzzled me.

"This...it doesn't seem like a scam mail..."

Among those teasing sentences in a round font, neither a 'Payment link' nor a 'Homepage address' were written anywhere.

If that's the case, then who is behind this? What is his objective?

That being said, there aren't any monsters like that...

Although I didn't believe in the genuineness of the mail, I wondered why didn't they prepare a better content.

In the end, I half-consciously deleted the mail, promptly adding it to the spam list.

...With this, I won't be bothered for a while.

Once again ducking myself into the bed, I soon felt my consciousness drifting away.

Perhaps that next time I wake up, I will have already forgotten about everything that happened this morning.

But I would never have thought...

...that such a trifling impulsive action would later end up causing an open mayhem between three monsters...

Chapter 1 - The beginning of the nightmare

"Hello, this is a delivery—"

"Ah, it's finally here."

Saturday, April 18th.

The package was delivered to my very ordinary, wooden house.

Suppressing my anticipation, I went to the entrance hall to retrieve the package.

Of course, if the contents were just some apples from a farm, I wouldn't be so hyped up.

There is only one thing that can excite me this much, and that is...

Porn.

Porn magazines.

I didn't expect the huge amount of porn magazines I ordered on the internet last night to arrive so soon.

This was so touching that I was on the verge of tears.

To be able to buy porn magazines without being seen, the world sure was convenient. Global warming, air pollution——although civilization was currently causing considerable damage, we humans should be thankful for its progression.

I, who had received the package, couldn't help but think of something:

Speaking of which, isn't the box too big?

The box almost covered the entirety of the entrance hall; even with both hands, I couldn't budge it in the slightest. If it was just porn magazines inside, then this would be a total overkill.

Moreover, the box itself was suspicious.

Why is there even polystyrene foam!?

When did they start shipping porn magazines as if it was fresh food?

But, I have no way of knowing since this is my first time ordering online. Certainly, Amazon must do it this way.

Anyway, I should open it before my sister Manami comes home.

I hurriedly opened the box.

However, inside the box was——

A girl's corpse in undergarments.

"Ah!"

Letting out a sound which could not really be described as manly, I took a step backwards.

H...h...hey.

What's with this bizarre scene? Where's the camera?

Looking around, I couldn't find anything resembling a camera; after waiting for a moment, there's still no sound of "Frightened success" which the host would normally say while moving the reflector away.

My heart was beating **dokun**dokun** furiously.

No doubt this girl was already dead.

——Her whole body was in tatters, just looking at her would give you the chills.

"Ah. Calm down."

I took a deep breath, filling up my lungs.

——*Don't be scared don't be scared, I have already seen it once.*

Long silver hair, gorgeous white skin that lacked vitality akin to that of a whitefish. Acorn-like eyes void of light and a pair of aquamarine pupils.

Although her chest wasn't big, she was slender. I considered her waist, which emphasized her curves, caused her to look very seductive. There were also innards sticking out of her stomach. Inspecting carefully, one could find that she was breathtakingly beautiful.

If we ignore the fact that she is dead, what's left is a hard-to-find beauty.

Uwa.

A corpse. A genuine corpse.

"Just give me a break already."

While thinking such, I closed the box.

Anyway, what should I do next?

Such a troublesome question.

And in so-called moral lessons, they don't teach how to deal with a corpse when one is sent to your house. Still, there's no other way but to think about it.

Among the options available, this was one that was the most reasonable——in case of accident, my life will enter the BAD END route.

I have decided, first of all, I will call the police.

For a second, the fact that I might look 'Guilty' entered my mind. Still, there is no other choice for me to choose from.

Even if I want to hide a corpse, the house has limited space. Of course, burying is also out of the question.

Just when I am about to turn around to grab the telephone——

The corpse suddenly stood up.

"————!"

Speechless.

I was rooted in my place like when a snake is staring at a frog, and my teeth were chattering non-stop from fear.

Impossible.

This can't be real.

Why can the body still move?

This is like the often seen zombie in a horror movie.

"Sorry for the sudden intrusion. You must be Kusumi Chiharu."

Ya——!! It spoke——!?

Hey. This is my first time hearing that zombies can speak? Japan has the saying "The dead cannot speak", but now I think it should be erased from the index.

"Y, yes and who might you be?"

Due to the other party being a zombie, he inadvertently used honorifics.

As a matter of fact, I am just an ordinary high school boy. There's no way I would have a zombie as an acquaintances.

"I am Zonmi, Zonmi R. McKenzie. I am your chosen partner."

"Pardon?"

"Hehe, don't play dumb. You already know, don't you. I won't disappoint you for choosing me as your partner."

"Ha..."

Displayed on Zonmi's face was an innocent smile.

Calm down. The flower embroidered undergarment is too much, I need to calm down first.....

"Then again, looking at your name 'Chiharu', I thought you were a girl. I didn't expect you to be a boy."

"People often say that, but my parents want me to be a considerate and calculating person."

Really, this is just too much. That, this zombie can talk.

Not in my wildest dreams did I imagine that one day I would hear a zombie say my name.

——While I was thinking.

"Awahhh. Pl, please don't look at me."

"Eh?"

This situation is just too abrupt.

Zonmi's cheeks were flushing red as she shrieked.

A moment ago Zonmi was still acting composed. I couldn't help but panic at the sudden change of attitude.

"Waaaaaa, what was I thinking. Just because I saw the name 'Chiharu', I assumed that you were a girl."

"Wait, what?"

Seeing Zonmi who was embarrassingly trying to conceal herself, I finally realized the current situation.

What, isn't this like a romantic comedy?

Too bad that I can't be happy in a situation like this.

How could I be happy when the half-naked beautiful girl has her innards spilling out!?

Although I don't know anybody who likes this, they definitely exist.

However, this development is a century too early.

"T, the clothes, quickly give it to me! Wait, why are you staring, you pervert!"

Zonmi snarled.

"Uwahh—"

Being called a pervert, this is very disturbing.

Even I'm not interested in a zombie.

Because I don't want to dirty my clothes, I picked the most ragged one and gave it to Zonmi.

Speaking of which, why is this zombie being sent to my home. Moreover, coming here wearing only undergarments.

Zonmi, who was picking up the clothes, said "What is with this! It's all worn out." while putting it on.

Incidentally, the feeling felt when you see a girl wearing a loose T-shirt wasn't evoked. The reason was because she was a zombie.

Anyway, her putting on the shirt saved a lot of trouble.

I didn't know where to direct my gaze; this is not because I found Zonmi's body to be attractive, but rather due to the fact that the indescribable innards were sticking out of her abdomen.

"To be brief, I have something to ask of you."

"What is it? If it is something trivial, I will send you flying."

"Who would ask that kind of thing."

A perfect situation.

In front of the round table in the living room sat a zombie girl.

Puzzledly, I served the zombie some tea.

What the heck am I doing.

"What brings a zombie like you to my house?"

I inquired for an explanation.

Speaking of which, what is with that partner thing?

The reason for Zonmi drooping her head down and clenching her fist tight was unknown.

"You, you have spoken the unspoken."

"Eh?"

"Zonmi"

"Yes?"

"My name is Zonmi! A proud ghoul, Zonmi! Please don't group me with those inferior zombies."

""

The slow witted me had just realized the current situation. Basically, I had stepped onto a landmine.

So it is like this. Zonmi is actually not a cool beauty, but a dead beauty in a sense.

I take back my words.

"Eh? How should I say it? I am truly sorry Zonmi-san. So, what should I call you from now on?"

"Just Zonmi is fine, Chiharu. I hope we could establish our relationship as a monster tamer and his partner."

"Oh? I understand."

"Thus said, answer my question Chiharu."

Haihai, said the lightly humming Chiharu.

"You were chosen as a monster tamer because you harbor exceptional talent. I am here to educate you——to become a top-class monster tamer!"

"It is not too late to master the English language in one and a half days."

"I am not some nasty salesman."

Calm down, calm down.

Monster?

Think rationally.

Those kinds of children's stories, it can't possibly be true.

But, what about Zonmi in front of me——her existence completely defied common sense. Everything had exceeded my expectation.

What to do. At times like this, I should call the cops first——.

"Rest assured, although you are just a snotty nose kid of a monster tamer, if you have me it will be a breeze. I will make you the number one monster tamer, the lord of all monster——the Maou."

"I haven't said a thing about wanting to be a monster tamer, let alone Maou. Don't just arbitrarily strike up a topic on your own."

"Don't worry. There's no need to panic since you don't have the right to refuse in the first place anyways."

"What do you mean?"

Adopting a poker face, Zonmi thus stated.

"The only race capable of being monster tamers are the humans, but those with talents number no more than thousands. About people who have contracted with monster, all of them are accomplished people in the society. It is not exaggerating to call it having a huge influence on the race."

"Tamer's selection——when I heard that Chiharu chose a zombie, we leapt in joy. Some seemed to have even ascended to heaven."

"It is as you hear Chiharu, this is not life threatening at all. If you don't accept it, a war will break out between the ghoul and human race. Please consider it."

"————!"

What is this.

A war between ghouls and humans?

Though it sounded unbelievable, Zonmi is here, here right in front me. It wouldn't be surprising to have other races than this. This possibility couldn't be ruled out.

But, monster?

That kind of suspicious job, no way in hell I would do it. I also didn't expect to choose a zombie as my partner.

Therefore——

"Sorry, but I do not believe that story of yours. Please don't bring it up again."

It is as stated.

Even if it is my fault for choosing this, even if a lot of people lose their lives, it is not all on me to blame.

Although saying it like this sounds unreasonable, there is no one out there that can reproach me.

"So it has come to this. Then will you still say the same thing after seeing this?"

Zonmi, pulling out an apple from god knows where, switched on the television.

Currently broadcasting on the daytime news program was——a live broadcast.

[Please look! The scene in front of us is so unbelievable!]

The news reporter while holding onto the microphone, hurriedly reported.

From the broadcasting caption, it is in Kanagawa prefecture, Yokohama.

That place isn't that far from here.

On the screen, a gigantic octopus is rampaging about.

Arrrreeeeee. I thought I just saw something strange.

I squinted my eyes.

Once again I looked at the screen.

However, it seemed I am not mistaken.

"Zonmi, what is that?"

"Sea monster, Kraken. From the looks of it, the contract with a monster tamer failed."

"So that's why it is running amok all over the place."

"Not quite delicious, it seems."

Not long after, the scene shifted to the residential area.

[Waaaaaaaa Daddy——]

[W, what is that strange creature!]

Due to the appearance of the creature, sounds of lamenting could be heard everywhere.

When did Kanagawa fall into chaos like this!?

"Hey, Zonmi! The houses are being plucked out like bamboo shoots! How can this not be serious!?"

"Please calm down. This is such a magnificent runaway. Surely a high ranking monster tamer has already been dispatched to deal with this."

[T, that.]

[T, that thing. Dear viewers do you see that? Totally unbelievable. A gigantic monster has appeared!]

The scene shifted by a lot along with the reporter's scream.

Skin resembling flames. Horns towering over the horizon.

Suddenly appearing out of nowhere, an ox like creature holding a hatchet in its hand.

[Uuuuuuuuuuu————]

The ox-like creature let out a monstrous roar, then lifting up the weapon over its head. Flash, it chopped down on the octopus monster.

"Ah"

"The outcome had been decided."

The axe let out an unpleasant sound as it went through the octopus's body. Soon, the octopus turned into yellow colored dust, dispersing into the air.

Hey, what the heck is this.

This had violated the law completely.

Following that, after the ox-like creature finished its job, it disappeared without a trace.

——A sudden occurrence.

What's left, are only the crowd of people and messed up street.

"It is as you witnessed, this is reality. In the future these creatures will continue to appear, and the destruction that happened today will occur frequently."

"...."

Switching off the television, Zonmi let out a low groan.

Indeed, it will be troublesome if those mythical creatures continue to make their appearance, but this is not the time to consider those things.

The question itself already poses a lot of doubts.

Just the fact that this zombie girl arrived at my house already spelled trouble. Above all, thinking that today's monsters incident will be a normal occurrence.

How I hope that this is just a dream.

How I hope that this is all a lie.

However, since it already happened, there is no choice but to accept it.

——To accept this kind of reality.

"Why, why is it so sudden."

Zonmi too, and the monster on the television, the timing of their appearance is too perfect.

"The gate linking the Netherworld and human world together——the Abyss -gate. The gate has greatly weakened. The only ones who are capable of maintaining peace between humans and monsters——are the monster tamers."

Once again he was reminded by this serious statement.

Isn't this turn of event kinda not favorable?

"I will ask just in case, how do I become a monster tamer?"

"Firstly you need to form a contract with me. Regarding this, some preparations are required——the ring should arrive at Chiharu's home soon."

Speaking of which this is like a rare item in Pokemon.

While he was considering this all over again.

DingDong~

The doorbell rang as if it had already been predetermined.

"Aiya, it seems the ring has been delivered. Then let's perform the contract."

"I understand. I understand so stay there."

After placating the excited Zonmi, I went to the door and unlocked it.

Were the delivery guy to see the house he would be at a loss for words.

[Hello—, this is the delivery.]

Uwahh, what is with this perfect timing.

Seems like it is true that the ring is being sent via the express delivery.

Lightly running over to the entrance. What was sent compared to the coffin Zonmi emerged out from it is very small.

Truthfully speaking, I had no idea about what was happening up till now.

There were many questions I would like to ask.

But, here I will form a contract with Zonmi, from today onwards I will be a monster tamer.

Even if this is the ice age, I would also like to refuse.

This kind of job is really dark.

"Chiharu?"

I turned around towards the lovely female voice, ehh!

Standing there is Zonmi.

"————!"

"What is with that shocked expression."

"D, don't just suddenly speak from behind me."

Damn it, even if I know it already, this is still too surprising.

Although it was better after putting on clothes, the zombie girl Zonmi's attractiveness hadn't changed one bit. This was really life threatening.

"So the ring has arrived."

"Apparently, yes."

"Then quickly open it! Care if I open it first?"

"I don't mind."

Displayed on Zonmi's face was an expression full of delight.

Why is she so happy about it.

By the way, how in the world could forming a contract with monster can make them happy? Even if I don't understand, isn't it all good if that can make others happy?

Subconsciously, he was pondering over the matter.

"Chiharu."

"Eh, what. For your information I haven't decided to be a monster tamer yet! Furthermore, I don't completely trust you yet!"

"It seems that before Chiharu can become a monster tamer, I need to discipline you from the start."

"Ha. What are you saying!"

At this moment, I recalled something important.

In Zonmi's hand are the porn magazines he ordered online yesterday night.

"W, wait. You are mistaken."

Such perfect timing.

Zonmi's eyes which are already like a dead fish gradually lost its light.

"What am I mistaken about? You nymphomaniac!"

In an instant, Zonmi's clenched fist came flying straight at my chin.

Aaaaaa, if only she is not a zombie—.

If only she is not a zombie, I would be happy at this romantic comedy development—.

I thought as my consciousness gradually faded away.

× × ×

"Ughhh."

When I opened my eyes, I discovered that I am being tied on the bed.

"Ahh, oniichan. You're awake~"

"Ma.....nami."

"Correct. I am oniichan's personal c**dump for it, Manami~"

Oh, I am right on the mark.

This daring speech like that of the Tokyo governor's.

My sister, Kusumi Manami.

Glamorous long black hair, as her brother I couldn't help but appreciate it as a piece of peerless artwork.

Just only this one point. If the brother complex could be cured, it would be the perfect image of an ideal sister.

"Oh right, Zonmi? Where is Zonmi!?"

Suddenly, like an electrical typewriter, his hazy memory slowly continued to come back.

Up until now, I should have been with the zombie girl, Zonmi!

"Zonmi? Oniichan, are you still sleepy? Maybe your imagination~"

"Hey."

"Besides, what is this Zonmi? A name? Ahahahaha—, what a strange name~"

Manami let out an innocent smile.

Is it real or not.

Hahaha, so it's just a dream. No wonder, it just feel too forced.

"Anyway. Did you see today's news, oniichan?"

"Eh, news?"

"It's about the monster battle! There's an octopus, ox and snake rampaging~"

"Octopus, ox, snake?"

What a combination.

Apart from their origin there are no commonalities at all.

"You will know once you turn on the television. It's a hot topic everywhere~"

"Really?"

"Really~"

"Haha."

This is bad. It seems that it isn't a dream.

Monsters do exist.

It exists in reality.

If it is like this, where did that Zonmi gone off to.

"How long have I slept, Manami?"

"Um~, from when I came back home two hours had already passed."

In an interval of two hours, two more monsters had made their appearances.

Damn it, what the hell, I don't get it at all—.

"Then, how come oniichan is lying on the hallway sleeping? In addition, surrounded by porn magazines."

"Oh."

It was shameful of me to be knocked unconscious.

Suddenly, I sensed a threat and tried to jump off the bed.

However, the crunching sound of metal obstruct me.

Crap. I forgot my hands are tied to the bed.

Even if I shift my position, my safety is not guaranteed. But it is too late to use force to break through now.

"Hehe, it is futile~since I have already restrained the whole of oniichan's body."

"Oi, this is going overboard."

"Please answer my question first, oniichan. Has your head become muddled from all these porn magazines? Are the H-contents that interesting?"

"N, no idea!"

I am in deep shit!

In fact he hasn't read it yet, as a result he doesn't know how much of H-contents there are.

At least please tell me what is inside.

"Hehe, you can only play dumb for now~ since I have these hostages."

"D, don't tell me."

In my mind there is only one possibility.

Since are there any others? There is only one thing second to my life in this world——the only possible answer is porn magazines.

For a school life devoid of youth. To a high school boy, a porn magazine is above everything else. The so-called holy bible of youth.

"Please answer me honestly, oniichan. Have you become muddled head because of porn magazines?"

"..."

Needless to say that all of my answers till now are true.

Just that how to explain about [Zonmi's arrival], I don't think Manami can accept it.

Moreover, even if I come up with a reason to gloss it over, I couldn't think of an excuse for the porn magazines part. I am currently in a pinch.

"Please! You can do anything you want, just spare the hostages!"

In the end——I could only plead for it like my life is on the line.

Don't tell me there are other ways.

"Umm, since oniichan said so."

"Really! You decided to give it back to me!?"

"I understand, I will release them~however, I will release only the sister incest related porn magazines."

"Isn't that the worst!"

"Of course. Housewives? Female teachers? Oniichan really has bad taste! These are unhealthy for you! You have already deviated from the path of a proper human!"

"..."

This is too much, too much.

Speaking of which, for my sister to think so is more outrageous.

"Sorry, oniichan. Actually Manami already understands."

"Hmm?"

"Looks like oniichan is restraining himself. So as not to walk the wrong path. No worries, this is also partly due to me——let Manami take responsibility for this!"

First I need to escape, but once again the relentless sound of metal crunching obstruct my path.

Waaaaaaaaaaa! My right wrist quickly moved up——!

Otherwise I——

"I, idiot! No need to panic, we are all Tokyo residents!? Aah, aah——"

Ruthlessly, the sound of wailing could be heard from the Kusumi's household.

× × ×

Concurrently on the other hand.

A place situated between the Netherworld and the human world.

At an ancient city in the barren wilderness, stood a pair, male and female.

"BOSS. Reporting in duty, code 063, the kraken has been successfully captured."

The man donning a black suit kneeled, saluting a masked female sitting on a throne.

"I see. Well done, well done. Now us, "Black Tamers" have approached our goal by another step. Well done."

"Ma'am, your kind words are too much."

"Continue to accomplish your missions and gather more——now is the best opportunity for us——enough for it to be recorded in history."

"This servant understands; still there is one thing on my mind."

"What is it, say it out."

"My worry is nothing. Rather than that the future of the seventh class. In actual fact, the extras——those inferior group of people, I don't see the worth of risking it."

"Hehe. About that matter do not worry."

The masked woman let out a slight laughter then proceededs to speak.

"Kurari. How many newcomers have been selected this morning?"

"Approximately a hundred."

"The correct answer is five hundred."

"!?"

The man called Kurari sensed a chill down his spine.

At present, officially registered monster tamers numbered approximately one thousand. In the case her words are true then the new members applied this morning amounted to half the total. This is quite messed up. Originally to train a monster tamer at least two senior tamers and three years time are required.

Don't tell me the upper echelon let out the fact that monsters exist in this world.

This can lead to a dispute between monsters and monster tamers.

"This must not be allowed to be disclosed! I can't possess any doubts toward them."

"Hehe. Although I don't know what is going on, but the new members are all of high caliber. For the preparation of the decimation of the Netherworld. Finally the whole magic association will take action."

"So it is like this. Still in the end it is by your will BOSS."

"..."

Among the new cadets there is one that required attention.

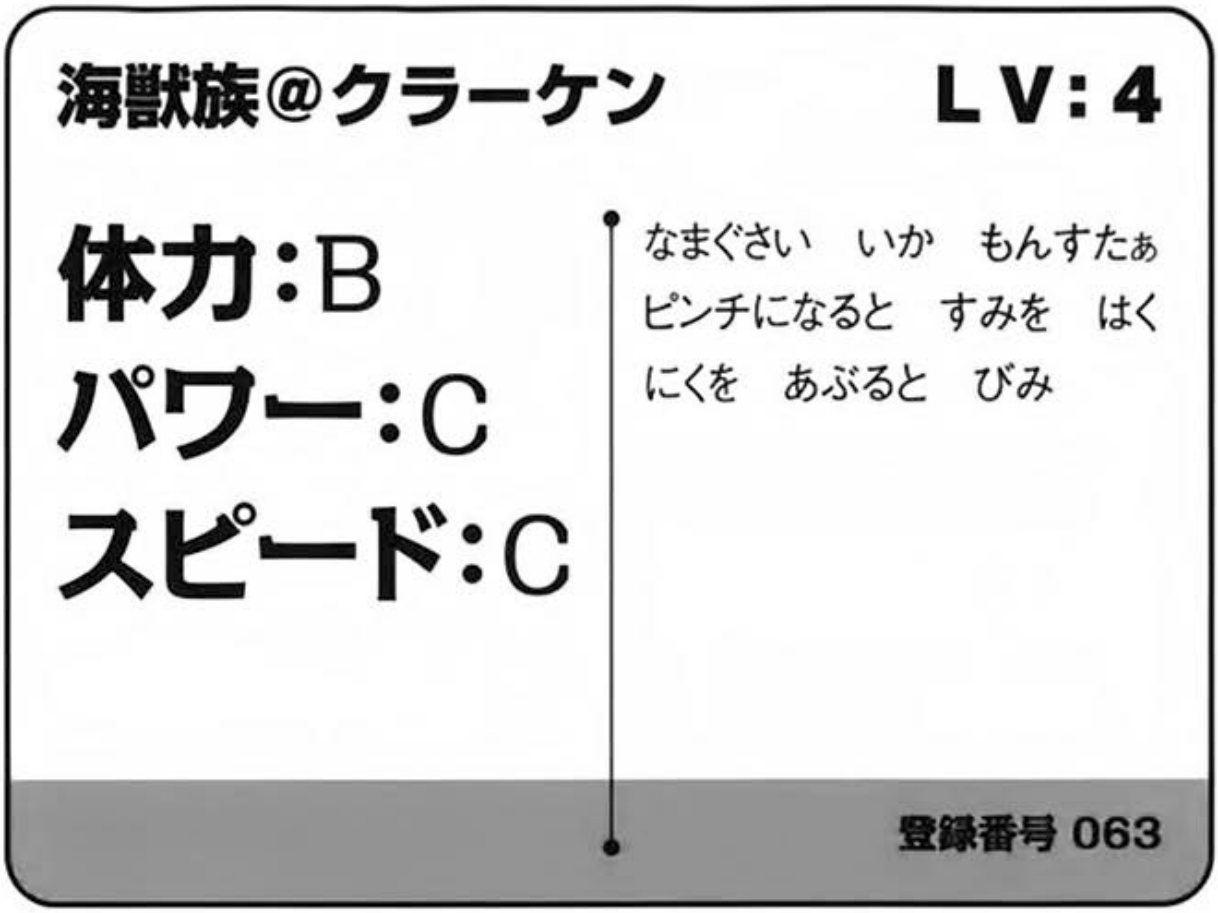
Kusumi Chiharu.

Though he is new, there is no one like him in the history to be favored by the monsters to this extent.

Human or monster.

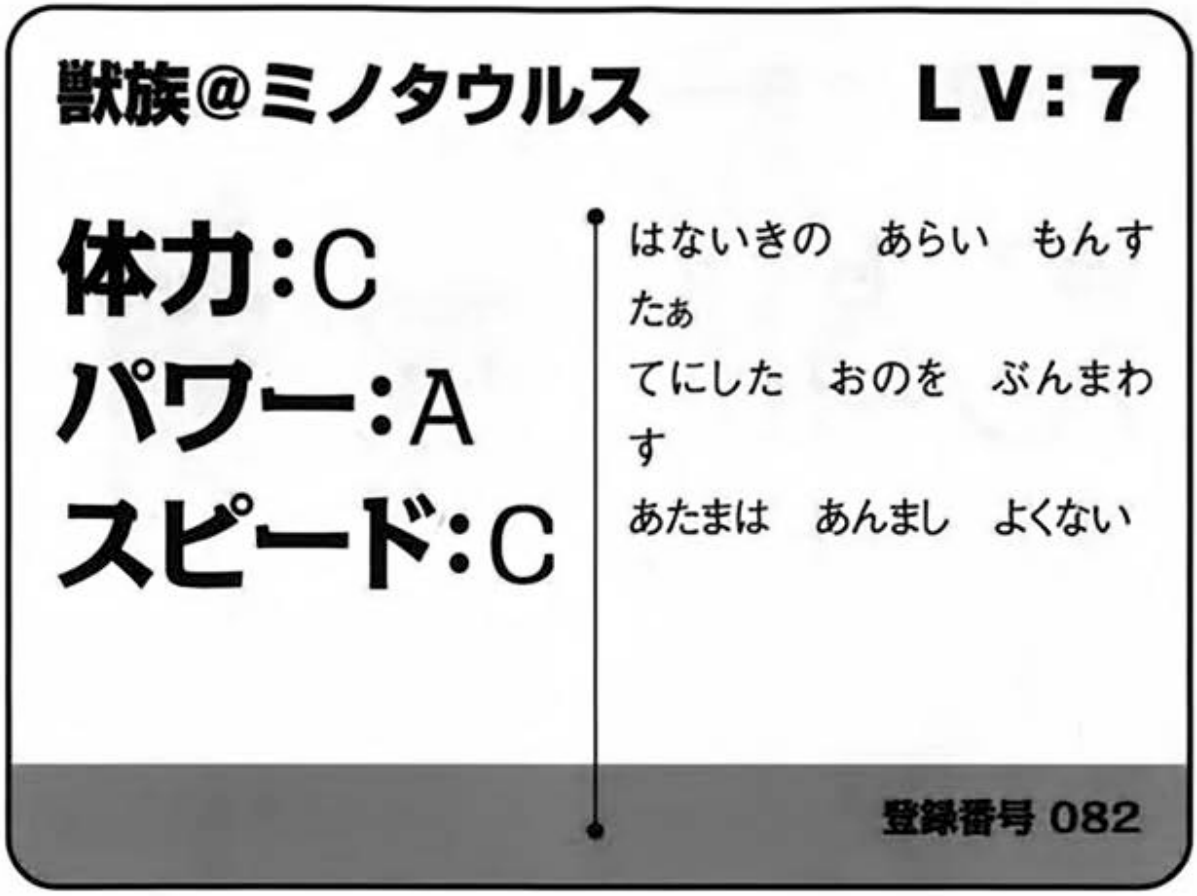
In the end which side will he choose, this is becoming more and more interesting.

The face under the masked woman broke down.



Sea beast tribe: Kraken.
Lv:4
Physical strength:B
Power:C
Speed:C

Smelly squid monster.
When in trouble, spits ink.
Its meat tastes good with oil.
Serial number: 063



Beast tribe: Minotauros
Lv:7
Physical strength:C
Power:A
Speed:C

Proud and haughty monster.
Brandishes an axe in its hand.
Not very smart.
Serial number: 082

Chapter 2 - Make a contract with me!

Afterwards.

Information about the monsters had spread throughout the world like wildfire, even the news had been reporting about it nonstop.

Simply that, these things had been repeating for countless times already in the world, up until now there was no major impact, because each time a monster caused trouble, another monster promptly appeared to beat them——in Zonmi's words, she claimed they were seasoned monster tamers (?) maneuvering in secret.

Nevertheless, after Zonmi arrived, there's no other news from her. Even the contract wasn't formed.

Two days had passed since that day; Sunday.

There's still the obligation to go to school, being a student sure is tiresome.

"Ahh—a, will monsters show up in this city—"

Calls of greeting rang throughout the classroom in early morning.

The person besides me who was spouting nonsense——Sakamoto Youhei.

Though his name sounded like that of a handsome male performer, his appearance was just above average. He is in a competition with me on the whether whose number of years without a girlfriend will last longer; up until now the result is still undecided.

"Oh—. I have never expected you to have this kind of suicidal tendency."

"Idiot, that's not it! How could I die a virgin before graduating."

"Don't regret your own words then."

Putting more importance in his own desires rather than his life, this Youhei is great.

"What is frequently presented in movies? It's girls being attacked by monsters! Here, I would heroically rescue her! There is no other way easier than this to hook up with a girl! Just rescuing a damsel in distress."

"How could you say it is easy—"

To have this spoken, it seems Japan is too peaceful.

"It is just a simple matter."

“Eh?”

“Chiharu, do you know about the monster incident?”

Monster incident——

The moment he heard this word, he screamed out inside his heart.

“It is circulating in the online forum. A monster that can overthrow another monster——it must be capable of being controlled, it seems they need to receive training under monster tamers to be able to do so."

“Oh—, so it is like this.”

“So cool—, those monster tamers. They could send those SDF freaks flying!”

Though my face didn’t show any interest, but in actual fact I was very shaken inside.

What if, monster tamers do really exist——.

I almost became a monster tamer. Because they said I got talent.

However, where had I gone wrong——it’s also hard to accept the fact that Zonmi disappeared in front of me.

“Why do I want to become a monster tamer, of course it is to hook up a girlfriend.”

“Isn’t that a bit too blunt”

“Thus said, Chiharu. Let’s go capture some monsters after school.”

“Eh? Wait a bit, how come it becomes like that?”

“What what, to be a monster tamer a monster partner is necessary.”

“Don’t say it naturally! Do you think you can partner up with a monster.”

“No problem, my family owns a butcher shop. There are plenty of rotten meats I can use to fish them up!”

“Dragon Quest!?”

Seriously, don’t mix game and reality together.

Moreover according to Zonmi, a contract and a ring is necessary——this is like the pokeball in Pokemon.

Speaking of which does his house sell good quality cheap meat, if so I will give it a shot, but do monsters will really form a contract from this.

(Clank Clank)

As I was wandering in thoughts, the female homeroom teacher——Moemi-sensei had already entered the classroom.

It’s homeroom time.

“Everyone please return to your seat.”

Following the teacher’s words, the clamor died down for a moment.

“Today, I would like to introduce a new transfer student.”

“Woahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh.”

In the next instant, the classroom atmosphere was enveloped with air of excitement.

“O, oi Chiharu. Did you hear that? This is so hard to believe, my hands and feet are shaking nonstop now? What private school is the person from? Isn’t this like a development in Galgame."

“I am also surprised.”

Being in the same state of mind.

Indeed, it’s strange for our school to have transfer students.

Regarding the junior and senior division of Seiran Private Academy, it’s rare even in normal schools, not to mention entering halfway through the term.

“Bi—Shou—Jo!”

“Bi—Shou—Jo!” “Bi—Shou—Jo!”

Not knowing when the entire classroom started to shout out the word ‘bishoujo’.

“Bi—Shou—Jo!” “Bi—Shou—Jo!” “Bi—Shou—Jo!”

“Bi—Shou—Jo!” “Bi—Shou—Jo!” “Bi—Shou—Jo!”

This is just too much.

What should I do if it turns out to be a boy.

Having a female transfer student, it is not that simple like in the world of manga or anime.

Being behind the trends, Seiran Private Academy had just changed to a co-ed school recently, the number of females were overwhelmingly small. Comparing the ratio between male and female it would be roughly about nine to one.

Were the school a whole boy school, they would have given up their hope long ago.

But, in this kind of environment of Seiran Private Academy, the place had become a den of testosterone.

“Please be quiet! Please come in, Zonmi-san.”

Eh.

Wait a bit. Just now, why did it sound so familiar.

(Clank)

Bearing the whole class’ expectation, a silver hair and sapphire colored eyes girl entered.

An uptight face reminiscent of a painting.

Legs and hands similar to those of a model.

Like an otherworldly being, a complete beauty.

Contrary to the previous uproar. The classroom was surrounded by a solemn atmosphere.

Absolute silence.

Truly an absolute silence.

They were all mesmerized by the transfer student’s beauty——.

“I am Zonmi R. Mckenzie. Please take good care of me from now on.”

Zonmi introduced herself with a cold and indifferent tone.

According to his memory Zonmi she has a pale complexion, and a hard to describe object protruding out of the stomach which wouldn’t be surprising if it is considered 18+.

But at present.

What’s standing in front of him is a human, furthermore, a dazzling beauty.

Am I dreaming?

What in the world is this.

“Zonmi-san, please do a short self-introduction.”

“I despise human beings. Therefore, let me state this in advance. Please do not talk casually to me.”

“”

This guy, what did she say on the first day of school. She should be able to differentiate between what should be said or not.

Still, what about if it stimulates those masochistic guys?

Looking besides him, Youhei assumed a [decided] pose.

“Then, what about Zonmi-san’s seat.”

The female homeroom teacher looked at the classroom saying.

“Here! Here here! Sensei, the seat besides mine is empty!”

Youhei quickly sprang up and said.

Eh, do we have empty seats left?

“Oi! Are you joking, isn’t it me who sits next to you!”

This guy, what conspiracy is he planning.

Not good. I have a bad premonition.

As expected, Youhei cracked up a devilish smile and spoke: “Sensei. Chiharu here stole his parents’ account at a young age, ordering H-magazine online, an undisciplined person. I suggest him to quit school.”

I have been accused. I was sold out by a friend?

“That’s rude! I had only bought it once!”

Moreover I had lost. Consequently, those books were thrown away by my sister.

“Hmph, even if it is true, sensei, Chiharu bought a porn magazine from nearby his house and did many unimaginable things in the toilet. He should definitely quit school.”

“Why do I need to quit school just because of that!”

This kind of thing, every healthy male high school student should have experienced it at least once.

Damnit. This scoundrel dare to sell out his friend.

Truly doesn't have any worth as a friend.

"Then Zonmi-san. It seems like the seat besides Youhei-san is vacant, please sit there!"

"Yes yes, the empty seat besides Youhei has already been occupied, isn't that me!"

A neighbouring boy shouted out.

Probably, the teacher couldn't bear with the disturbance Youhei caused.

Although he doesn't quite understand, but it did save up a lot of troubles.

"Where have you been?"

There were a lot of questions he wanted to ask.

He inquired her in an inaudible voice to the surroundings.

"Of course, to attend this school, I had done a lot of work in the background."

"Ha, so what is it for?"

"Do you even need to ask, I had already stated it before——to train you into an excellent monster tamer. In order to realize this goal, your daily routine must be changed first"

"Wait wait, I don't get what you are trying to do."

"Only people who possess a strong will could wield large amount of magic. Therefore I need to discipline your rotten body and mind thoroughly from step one."

"I don't want to be called that by a rotten person like you."

"Ahah, Chiharu do you have a poor eyesight? In what way am I rotten?"

Reexamining once more.

The face was still like that of a doll the same as before.

Looking at her body——it is the same as those uniform well developed bodies of foreign models, perfectly in contrast with the Seiran Private Academy's uniform.

With her appearance, out of one hundred people all would say that she is a bishoujo.

"What did you do to make your body look like that?"

“With magic, changing your appearance to a human one is easy as pie. Henceforth I will use this appearance to monitor Chiharu.”

“Monitor, really you.”

“Is there anything you are dissatisfied with?”

“Of course!”

Besides, I have no intention of becoming a monster tamer——.

Why does she always ignore other people’s opinions.

“Moreover, is the object from last time sent?”

“Eh?”

“It’s the ring. Let’s quickly forge the contract.”

“Hey. It seems you are pretty insistent on forming the contract. Is there anything particular about it?”

“Really, you really don’t know anything Chiharu.”

Zonmi impatiently answered.

“There are two benefits of a monster forming a contract with a monster tamer. First is the magical supply. Through the contract, the magical power accumulated in the tamer’s body will be sent to the monster.”

For monsters magic is like their lifeline. Not only can it boost their power, but if the magical supply is exhausted, maintaining a human appearance is impossible.

The other point is summoning. To be exact this benefits the tamer. By using the ring as a medium and chanting, tamers can summon the monster whenever they want. Without summoning the monster, there is no way for the person to protect himself.

“Urgh——. In other words, me supplying the magic stored in my body to Zonmi, Zonmi would heed my summon any time.”

Basically it is as said. Like the [imperial summon] in the Kamakura Bakufu shogunate period.

Setting aside the question how in the world did she know about Japanese history for now, the reasons Zonmi gave sounded reasonable.

Well, there’s no way for him to know even if there is magic power currently produced inside his body.

“It’s a shame, but there is no said ring being sent. It’s not lost either.”

“So it's like this, how strange.”

As the conversation proceeds along, morning class had already ended.

Truthfully speaking, what the teacher had said didn’t seep into his head.

However there’re no big issues now. Just in case, I better ask Youhei.

“Excuse me. Where is Kusumi-san?”

Amidst the classroom full of males came a clear voice of a female.

Looking at the owner of the voice, it is my childhood friend.

A model-like appearance with the pair of eyes as her selling point. Long orthodox type ponytail tied by a ribbon draping behind. Combining with proper dressing she exuded a grandiose atmosphere.

A high class lady——she would leave an impression even for people who saw her for the first time.

Kurose Kyouko.

Called out my name, she is known to be the best girl in school.

“Ah, it’s Kyouko-sama.”

“Our angel has descended here.”

The boys all suddenly perked up.

The situation is similar to that of when a rabbit is thrown into the pen. Like a hell spider’s silk.

The number of female in Seiran Private Academy is sparse to begin with, and Kyouko’s reputation is extremely high.

For how widespread is her reputation, inside the monthly magazine that is published privately in my school [Sexual Promiscuity], [Kyouko-chan is really an angel!] was nominated for this year Buzzword Award.

Every week in the school [Kyouko-chan’s goods] could be seen dealing everywhere in secret, all of a high price. Though I don’t know how it has come to this, but if there are used tissues or tights (with DNA verification), rumors say that the price will rise up to several ten thousand yen.

I for one don’t understand why people need to fuss over such things.

Again this is the special circumstances of this school.

“Hey, Kurose Kyouko(?) is calling you.”

The classmates were directing their bloodshot eyes filled with killing intent at me.

W-wait a moment, I haven’t done anything, have I?

“Zonmi, come with me for a sec.”

“Chiharu. Did you even listen to what I just said? I said I'm gonna monitor Chiharu 24/7.”

“”

Zonmi cast over a sight full of enmity.

Oi, you don’t plan on following me into the bath and toilet do you.

I ridiculed in my heart.

“Zonmi-san! I have fallen head over heels for you at first sight! Please go out with me!”

Youhei’s voice sounded like a novice comedian.

“You’re too sly Youhei! I am cleary first!”

“No no, I saw her twelve thousand years ago.”

Zonmi was surrounded by a group of men.

These guys, really have no integrity whatsoever.

Seiran Private Academy.

Always ranked first in the [Most unwanted boyfriend] list of a nearby private girl school.

But, this is the perfect opportunity. It’s a chance for me to get away from Zonmi, and it seems Kyouko has something to talk about.

“Ah! Wait! Chiharu!?”

Ignoring Zonmi’s pleading gaze, I ran towards Kyouko.

Sorry Zonmi. I will be back soon.

×××

“Too slow! You sure got guts to have me wait here for so long! When did Haru-chan become so daring. Who do you think you are?”

When she opened her mouth, a torrent of cute yet furious words came pouring down from Kyouko.

Though he almost got used to it, but how talented a person does she think she is to say so?

“That line, I would really love to say it back to you. So what now, it is really rare for you to call out to me.”

My status as a childhood friend with Kyouko is far too different from your typical gal game’s setting. The days when we had a good relationship was limited only to elementary school, after becoming a junior high school student, eating lunch together, playing together, those sort of things were gradually gone.

Even if our relationship at present is those of a friend, we didn’t interfere with each other's daily life.

“Humph! It’s rare for me to call out to you like this. Don’t you have any problems adopting that kind of attitude?”

“No problem at all.”

“Could you forgive me this time!?”

“Ok, I forgive you.”

I lightly poked Kyouko’s proud forehead, “Uwah” a low sound of lamenting was issued, she then glared furiously over here.

“Oh. Your sense of humour is really primary school kid-level.”

Kyouko mumbled to herself. It was undeniable though.

“So what is it. There are people waiting for me so could you briefly say it out.”

“That, today I have something important to discuss.”

I couldn’t help but feel bewildered at Kyouko who bowed her hand then left.

“What is with you, got a period?”

“Humph!”

“Uwah.”

Due to the wind, the skirt gently floated up.

Like a herbivore, her slender leg smashed onto my head. A clean hit.

“Uh, that hurt.”

“A-are you an idiot!? Why would I talk about my menstruation period with you!?”

“Thought you forgot to bring sanitary towel and the likes.”

“If I say I want it will you give it to me! Why do you carry those kind of things around, you pervert!”

“Of course I don’t have them. I can’t say for sure I have tampons or not.”

“That’s even more gross!”

Kyouko did a beautiful comeback.

From her retort just now it seems she is quite experienced in this.

“Then, you came to see me just for this? So stupid, I will go back.”

“It’s not this of course! G-give me a moment.”

As he was turning back to leave, his sleeve was tugged.

“Please! Today I have something important to discuss with you.”

“Oi, so what is it. This isn’t like you.”

A beautiful and talented woman. Self-conceited.

These proverbs perfectly fit her, today she was strange somehow.

It’s like getting the heroine to have a MAX favorable impression of you. Did she eat something weird.

“In short it’s inconvenient to talk about it here. Let’s go to a place with no people.”

“Yes?”

My childhood friend who was tugging at my sleeve along with looking up at me, I couldn’t help but skip a beat at this.

“W-w-w-w-what do you want?”

“Please! It’s of the utmost secrecy so I don’t want other people overhearing it.”

She said it is a secret.

Looking at my childhood friend whose cheeks were flushed red——I finally noticed.

This girl, is in love with me.

Saying she wanted to go to a place void of people, no matter which era it is, it must be inside the gymnasium.

Although there will be a lot of people gathering here at lunchtime, but luckily it is quiet in the morning.

“I am sorry for calling you out.”

“No, no problems. So, what do you want to talk with me?”

I am more evil than I thought.

What Kyouko wants to say——it’s clear as day.

Though I already guessed what it is, I still asked about it, I am really a terrible person. Maybe I got a natural disposition for making girls cry. I, am such a natural philanderer.

“I think Haru already knew about it.”

“Um um.”

“I, want to form a contract with Chiharu.”

“Yeah?”

Wait wait.

Did I just hear something familiar.

“I think Haru already knew about it. Truth be told, I am a nephilim.”

“What?”

“Well. Haven’t you heard——from a member of the International Monster Association? When I knew Haru chose me as your partner, although it’s not what I had expected, I am really glad. Afterwards I think that if it is Haru then it would be really great.”

Kyouko with her blushing face was fidgeting all over.

In the meantime, I racked my brain assessing the current situation.

The International Monster Association? Where have I heard that suspicious term before.

If Kyouko is really a nephilim then she is the same as Zonmi; a monster that has the ability to shape shift as a human.

How can that be possible! Kyouko had lead a normal human life up till now.

"I have always felt abase for being a monster. I detest myself for not being a human. Nevertheless, after I heard that Haru had been chosen as a monster tamer, a dramatic change occurred to my thoughts. Ah, I subconsciously thought that isn't this fate? Haru is the tamer and I am your partner. No problem, everything will be fine as long as there is me! We will make the strongest combination ever!"

Kyouko was speaking nonstop like a running faucet, causing me to have a headache.

"W, wait a bit. Do you have any proof to show that you are a monster?"

"If you mean transforming, then I can show you my true form."

""

What came off from my childhood friend mouth was the complete opposite of what I thought, this is like a line from the final BOSS in an RPG game, this is beyond my wildest imagination.

"That so, then mind changing for me. I still can't believe you are a monster no matter what."

"Oi, there's no way I can do this in the public right? Absolutely impossible! It's embarrassing!"

"Please bear with it, I beg this of you."

"Y, you insist on seeing it?"

"Yes."

Though the reason for why Kyouko is blushing is still unclear, but I still want to see--what kind of monster you are. Furthermore, this helpless look would kinda make people feel relieved.

"I understand. Then, let me undress first. Haru turn your head back."

After I turned back as she instructed.

Um, clothes?

Why clothes, I wonder why, but the answer suddenly popped out in my brain.

Kyouko said that she is a nephilim——that means, her transformed body would be much larger than the current one, it could rip the uniform apart.

It seems I have no way out of this.

Wait a minute, if a monster appeared here, wouldn't that cause the school to fall into chaos?

From the news some days ago, the image of the scared citizens when facing the octopus appeared in his head.

"W, wait. That just now doesn't count——."

As I turned around, I was rendered speechless.

Undergarments.

What is in front of me is a set of undergarments.

Apparently Kyouko was in the middle of undressing, she was currently going to take off her undergarments. From her spilling breasts it could be seen that it wasn't really that big, saying it as currently in a developing state would also do.

Back to the topic, she is still wearing that cute laced panty, she hasn't made any progress from primary school at all.

"Wahhhhh————!"

"Wait, this is an acci-"

As Kyouko was screaming-

"What are you guys doing?"

Zonmi had descended from the sky.

This is not due to me hallucinating.

Zonmi was holding onto an umbrella in her right hand.

This girl had gone overboard.

Since childhood, everyone dreamt of jumping off from a high place with an umbrella in hand.

This was being realized by Zonmi who was jumping off from a window on the third floor (roughly).

Zonmi was lightly fluttering in the air, like a strand of hair being blown by the wind. Such a graceful movement. What kind of trick did she use to achieve this?

"What are you doing, nephilim?"

"_____"

Zonmi called Kyouko a nephilim. So Kyouko is really a monster.

"Who are you? Why are you here!"

"Why you ask, because I am chosen as Chiharu's partner. It's a given that I should be by his side."

"Huh, partner? You liar! It's clearly me who Haru had chosen!"

"You dare spout nonsense even now, it's useless to try and trick us!"

Zonmi looked at Kyouko who was only in undergarments with a penetrating gaze.

So that's what happened. So it is this kind of situation.

It's not strange for Zonmi to be mistaken. Although it's not other people business.

"I, it's not like that! It's because Haru wants to see it no matter what, that's why I stripped."

"Huh?"

Although it is the truth why do I get a hunch that this will invite misunderstandings.

Both eyes of Zonmi began to be devoid of light, no difference from a dead fish eyes.

"Chiharu, is what the nephilim said true?"

"Yes, it's the truth."

After I answered this, Zonmi deliberately gave off a "kuku" sound as she ferociously glared at Chiharu.

"So Chiharu is this overjoyed over the nephilim's naked body~. To the extent that he even forgot our contract, I will separate you from that woman right now."

"Wait, it's a misunderstanding! I only wanted... To see Kyouko's true appearance."

Even though I'm telling the truth — it seems it has backfired.

"Fu, fu, so, master, you say you aren't satisfied by seeing the nephilim in underwear, so you wanted to see her stark naked body?"

"Eh, Haru. Is that so?"

"Tha-that's wrong, idiot!"

How'd I say it, could it be that not only Zonmi, but Kyouko too is having a misunderstanding?

It's like I'm talking to myself. Do they want to kill me...

"Don't try to deny it, you pervert tamer obsessed with eroticism that forgets his obligations, die!"

CLONK

Strike. Zonmi's umbrella impacted on my forehead.

... Shit, again? She's done it again?

What a deja-vu.

With a disgusting feeling as if she had rattled my brain, my vision became white for an instant, then turned red. It seems my head is bleeding somewhere.

Like that, sprawled on the ground... I didn't lose consciousness.

Gueh...

In this world, I don't think that there's such good timing.

Shit. If it was like that, I should've beautifully fainted from the start. At least that way I wouldn't have to suffer so much!

My head spinning, I strongly felt as if puking.

"That monster there! Look here! If you look, we may resolve the misunderstanding!"

"You're still going on with that? Chiharu couldn't have chosen no one but us ghouls!"

Kyouko, who unnoticed had put on back her uniform, was carrying for some reason some documents in her hand.

"... Ng!"

Zonmi, after rudely grabbing them and taking a look, she soon began to tremble.

CLONK

As I was crawling on the floor, Zonmi swung down her umbrella into my skull.

Ha, ha, ha. Thanks... I can die at least...

As I was losing consciousness, for some reason I was grateful for Zonmi's nonsensical violence.

× × ×

Once I recovered my consciousness, I saw a very weird scene.

For starters, it wasn't my room. Pure white sheets. Long and narrow light tubes.

Around me, something similar to a thin curtain delimited what seemed a private space.

The infirmary.

Though it's not a place I'm familiar with, it seems I'm at the infirmary.

"Have you woken up?"

When the thin curtain opened with a light sound, I saw two faces I recognized. They were Zonmi and Kyouko.

"Ah!"

As soon as I saw their faces, I recalled in a flash what had happened before.

My guts started to roar, it was as if my entrails were boiling.

"Zonmi... I'm mad..."

"Why, pervert?"

Said Zonmi, seemingly having no idea.

"Don't come with that! What would've happened if I died!?"

"Don't worry, Chiharu. You won't die from something like that."

"... The heck you say?"

Once I asked that, Zonmi, without even batting an eye, started to tell me.

"Humans able to become monster tamers have over-the-top resilience. Because, in the end, they can use the magic power they generate inside their bodies to heal. Know what I say? Have you suffered in the past any serious wound?"

"... Maybe."

Now that you say it, that's right.

From the time when I was a kid, my wounds have always healed faster than average.

Sadly, starting with my sister, I've been subjected to more nonsensical violence than average, and that's why my body has gained resilience, or that's what I thought... Though, if I think about it, that has no scientific base.

"Eeerm, wouldn't it be better to explain things to Haru asap?"

The one who interrupted like that was Kyouko.

I don't know how much time I've been unconscious, but surely the first term has already started — I'm grateful for Kyouko's worrying(?).

"Before that, Chiharu, I want to ask you something. The International Monster Association — the IMA, do you know about it?"

"Nope, not in the least."

Or, to be correct, I didn't know any more than what they've told me until now.

"Haa... I suppose." "So, it's like this..."

Their reaction seemed like a mix between shock and bewilderment.

Mmm, is it so bad that I know nothing?

"Firstly, how did you choose us? Because there's no doubt about that..."

"Wait a minute! I don't remember having chosen neither Zonmi nor Kyouko? I mean, I didn't know from the start about any election! What election..."

At last I was able to ask the question that had been bothering me since the start. It seems that's the source of our disagreements.

"Didn't you receive a mail from the IMA? Every rookie tamer shall choose from three compatible monsters which one will be his first partner..."

Mail.

Mail?

"Ah."

Now that I think, there was something like that...

When did it happen? I think it was not long ago.

"You received the mail! Well, Haru, what did you do with it?"

"Since it seemed too shady, I deleted it and marked it as spam."

"..." "..."

Eeeerm. Have I said something so weird?

"So that's it. If you deleted it without answering, I suppose they sent you another one, but, how bad, you had it blocked. Isn't that irregularity the source of this mess?"

"Uuu... What do I do. Now how will I explain it to papa."

Zonmi was looking intently to me, talking with detachment, while Kyouko was obviously downcast.

"Wait a minute! I don't get it. Why in the world does it seem I've done something bad!?"

With a grave tone, Zonmi let out the bomb.

"Summarizing, we are in a situation where you have to choose between me and the nephilim."

"Mmm, is that a problem?"

"It's a very big problem! Rookie tamers like you can only make a contract with a single monster at a time. And as I said before, the contract with a monster tamer is essential to the monster's social status, you could completely ruin the reputation of the clan you don't choose!"

"... Ng!"

At that moment, I realized for the first time its true importance.

Zonmi had assured at the beginning that, were the pact cancelled, it wouldn't be weird if war started between ghouls and humans.

And, since that's probably also the case with Kyouko, If I make the contract with Zonmi — will war start between humans and nephilim?...

"Who will you make the pact with, Chiharu?"

Said Zonmi looking disdainful at me.

"Eh, eeerm. I..."

"Of course Haru will choose me, right?”

Told Kyouko, her eyes full of uneasiness.

"Eh?"

"After all, Haru has seen... my pa-panties! That's why, take responsibility and make the contract!"

"No, I find the reasoning a bit weird..."

Surely, it something nice to see...

When I glanced at Zonmi looking for help, for some reason, 'Muu!', she was pouting.

"If it's like that, I have preference with the contract. Since Chiharu has seen... my i-innards! Take responsibility!"

"That exceeds my comprehension ability..."

Innards and panties. Which one is more embarrassing to be seen?

Fuu... Calm down. Let's cool my head. Now matter how much I think about it, I can't find a comparison standard...

"Chiiihaaaruuu! You alive?..."

A joyful voice like that of a young performer was heard.

Suddenly, through the infirmary door entered a guy with a familiar spiky-head[1].

It was no other than my buddy — Youhei.

Like sent from Heavens.

Today may be the day I'm grateful for his existence.

"Sorry, it's time for Calculus."

"Wai, Chiharu!" "Haru!?"

[1] Go look any illustration of TAMNI's Kamijou Touma.

Looking back to talk to the two beauties that tried to stop me,

"Hey, let's go, Youhei!"

"What happened, Chiharu, aren't you a bit too lively?... Eh, hey? What are Zonmi-san and Kyouko-tan doing here?... Eh, uwaaaah, ouch, it hurts. What happens, Chiharu? Let me goooooo!"

Pulling Youhei by an ear, I quickly got out of the infirmary.

It was close. A little bit more and I couldn't have avoided an irreparable disaster.

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At the same time, spying Chiharu and the rest from a faraway place, there was a non-human girl.

Clad in a bewitching negligée, a descendant of those said to be the most ancient dragons of the world — the red dragons.

Lying face down on the bed, she was looking at a lapis lazuli-colored crystal ball.

It's said that red dragons had the curious trait of gathering treasures from all ages and places, and sleep laying above them.

Because of that, over her bed there were spread treasures equal to the yearly revenue of a small country, taken from her outings.

Of course, the crystal ball she was staring into was also an invaluable treasure.

The crystal ball could reflect things as if its was a mirror.

"That... Is the Monster Tamer selected as apt for me?"

Reflected on the ball, a young male high school student dressed in cheap clothes could be seen.

The level of the monsters a tamer can handle depends on their ability.

In other words — the might of the monsters he has at his charge is proof of the greatness of the tamer.

"Fu... May be that I have underestimated him..."

Though she showed a self-torturing smile, in her heart, she thought it would be convenient.

Since a tamer without knowledge or experience will be easier to control for the monster.

"Kusumi Chiharu... Is that? I'll use him as much as I am able. This night, the repayment of the blood will start."

In her dim room, the girl let out an eerie smile.

Chapter 3 - The assigned mission

The Ghoul that was suddenly delivered to my house — Zonmi Ra McKenzie.

The one that suddenly confessed to being a Nephilim — Kurose Kyouko.

Being currently trapped between the two of them, I was in a very dangerous position.

It was no joke, though it's not like I could tell how serious it was. If I found a green mushroom[2] lying around, I'd pick it up and eat it.

Since I had to sleep soundly at the infirmary's bed until a while ago, the contents of the History lesson went totally over my head. Giving a quick glance at my surroundings, there was one female student giving me a glare as cold as ice. It was Zonmi.

It seems like my previous fleeing had somehow offended her.

Hu~m, I should do something about this. Nonetheless, this problem was already not something I could solve by myself. Surely, besides the fact that the conversation steadily grew out of proportion like that, the information was very scarce from the start...

I took a deep sigh.

Then, I remembered the conversation we had right before at the infirmary.

International Monster Association.

Quite a suspicious organization... But it piqued my interest. Giving it careful thought, that was the source of it all — it seems they are pulling the strings.

Maybe there I can find some kind of solution...

A ray of hope from the Heavens. I immediately looked for it, cell in hand. When in trouble, ask Google-sensei[3].

Results: 12,400 hits — It was faster than I thought.

It seems that the International Monster Association... In short, IMA, doesn't have a single head office, but instead they have set up a number of branch offices. Frankly, though I wondered if it was good to have all this information so easily accessible, I was thankful nevertheless.

After looking for the nearest branch office, I saved the address on my cell's memory. It seems that the place was in the area.

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[2] Mario reference.
[3] i.e. he's using the browser function on his cell phone to use a search engine.

"Good! With this it'll be OK."

"... What's with it's 'oh-key'?"

Of course, this voice belonged to Zonmi. The umbrella she carried was sparkling.

With the point dripping red, I wonder whose blood it is.

"I think that this is not good too, I pondered about some things... A plan to overcome this situation."

"Hoho, you will finally make a contract with me, won't you?"

"How did you arrive to that conclusion! Nobody said so!"

No matter how many times you repeat it, I don't plan on getting such a shady job like monster tamer. Rather than that kind of job, I'd even wash corpses part-time.

"Or, how should I tell you? Why are you carrying an umbrella even if it's not raining?"

I'd been trying to ask it since a while ago. The water-blue umbrella in Zonmi's hand, it doesn't matter how you look at it, it's not one you could buy at a convenience store for 500 yen[4]. Is this what you call "made on order"? It doesn't matter from where she brought it, in any case it's surely pretty expensive.

"What a foolish question. We ghouls are weak against sunli — any light-based attack. This is a necessary tool to protect ourselves."

In order to avoid saying "sunlight", she corrected herself like that.

"Hu~mpf. Then, when you face one of those... light-based attacks, what'll happen?"

"When the corruption advances too much, our life is in danger. For the same reason, heat is also a hazard; the season known in the Human World as summer sends to hospital 100,000 ghouls each year."

"Ugh..."

How should I put it, there are 100,000 ghouls?

That's a scene I don't want to picture.

"Ah! Could that be the reason why Zonmi, in the beginning, came to my house in only her underwear...?"

"Wha-wha-wha-what are you saying so suddenly!?"

[4] $5

"Wasn't that to reduce the body heat?"

"... Yes? Isn't that obvious!?"

"A~h, so that was it, like I thought. This solves another mystery..."

Seems like that cleared all the doubts in my mind.

Even ghouls have their problems. Surely, if they are confined in an airtight space for long periods of time, their body temperature would probably end up rising.

"... By the way, I'd like to ask you something as reference; until now, what did you think was the reason?"

"Hu~mph, I thought it was simply your hobby..."

BAM!

"Guah!"

I received a strong hit on my shin with the aforementioned umbrella.

A soothing nice sound resounded through the classroom.

"Ouch... Why, you idiot Chiharu... I got hit too."

Though I had the feeling that I could hear my buddy's moans from behind, I'd like to think it's the air.

That, wouldn't it hurt if it wasn't really a joke?

A lot of things happened and the end of classes drew near.

It was heart-breaking. I didn't know if mayhem would break before reaching there.

And in addition to that.

I was currently trapped in a real game of tag[5] with two monsters that faced me each time with a "let's make a contract".

Once the lesson ended, I rushed to the toilet even though I didn't have the need.

At noon break, the lunch I ate while sitting on a toilet that had a strong smell of ammonia.

[5] 鬼ごっこ (onigokko) in Japanese, with 鬼 meaning "ogre"

This kind of moving endeavor, if I don't stop that trouble by today, will end up being the norm.

That's why.

With the signal of the end of classes, because of the aforementioned, I rushed out at full power.

"Ah! Hey, Chiharu! Why are you fleeing, you coward!?"

"Oy, Chiharu! You promised to come with me to catch monsters after classes!"

However, I didn't look back. I had the feeling that I shouldn't look back.

Let's follow what my father told me. Let's head once and for all to the International Monster Association. Though it'll be good if I find some kind of valuable information... The timely end of the noon break + the full speed I came with till here = not a soul around.

I was careful that Zonmi and Kyouko[6] didn't chase me. I ended up quickly leaving the school.

I hurriedly finished changing into my outdoor shoes by kicking the ground.

Then, as I approached the school gate, I was struck by a heavily uncomfortable feeling.

There there were trucks piled like bricks.

I blinked once. I rubbed my eyes.

It can't be, recently my eyes must be playing tricks to me.

Hahaha... It seems that somehow or other, the scene I'm seeing right now is not a hallucination.

The countless piled trucks were packed right before the gate, as if someone intentionally put them there to obstruct the exit. What a nonsensical view.

"Ha-ru~"

I looked at the source of the voice.

It came from far above. From the top of the piled trucks.

[6] It said "Zonmitachi", but since they are 2 as for now, I'll better put both names instead of "the others".

There, squatting slightly, was a slender girl. Blown by the wind, her ponytail swayed right and left.

"Kyouko..."

I couldn't do nothing but stood with my mouth shut.

Unbelievable. Could this all be Kyouko's doing...?

"Sorry, Haru. It's a dead end."

"Hey, hey, this better be a prank."

Is it because of the mood? This girl... gives a different feeling than usual.

The atmosphere froze from the tension.

"... Haru is a bad kid. Since you won't make a contract with me. That's why you ran away."

"Wait a minute! What are you planning to do!"

The time, after school.

Here and there were students going back home, it seemed that they would notice something strange going on.

"Though I think that Haru will somehow be somewhat fine, please don't die. Perhaps, since I can't go easy... I'll obligate you to make the contract by force!"

"Ehm... Hi?"

This is bad.

Kurose Kyouko.

Though it seems she has a reputation in the school of being an angel, right now her expression was, no matter how you look at it, that of a demon. She'll use any means to reach her goals... That's what her eyes were saying.

Then, as if she had thought of something, Kyouko removed her bracelet from her wrist and threw it to the sky.

I wonder what will happen.

The bracelet changed in a flash into a rod[7], isn't that her weapon of choice?

That shape... It's something you usually see in games.

Its design was like a mix of a spear and an axe. Perhaps it's what they call a halberd.

I think Kyouko won't hesitate to thrust it from the top of the trucks,

"Secret technique: moonsault."

I had a hunch she muttered something like that.

The truck revolved in mid-air. Something incredible revolved in mid-air.

Though I don't think I know what to say, Kyouko, making use of her abnormal superhuman strength, as she started to make a piercing attack, she tossed with force the truck she was standing on.

Describing a beautiful arc, she turned in mid-air. She fell onto me like that.

Along with a thunderous roar as if the earth was splitting, a cloud of dust danced in the air.

"Wah!?"

I managed to narrowly dodge that. If my reaction was one second late, by now I would have become as flat as her chest.

"Ah~! Why did you avoid it...? Had it hit, you wouldn't have need to suffer."

Hey, hey. You must be joking... What ridiculous strength.

"What the heck! Didn't you want to make a contract until just now!?"

"... Maybe it's Haru who doesn't understand anything. To monsters, what the meaning of the contract with a tamer is... If it continues like this and that ghoul girl fetches the contract, I'll act like this."

"..."

That's right, Zonmi also said the same thing before.

[7]全属棒 (zenshokubou) or all-[included/affiliated/belonging] cane. I don't know how to translate this and I haven't found no info on it.

But because of that, is it good this contracting by force...?

GURUN, Kyouko wielded the aforementioned truck.

That's bad, her reach is too long. I don't think I can avoid being hit.

And if I try to stop the attack, both my arms will end up totally smashed.

Like that, I had a single option left. I kicked the ground and dashed at full power.

"Ku..."

GOTSUN, a dull sound echoed through my bones. It seems like I couldn't avoid it by a paper-thin margin.

It seems that my left leg ended up taking serious damage. I don't think I can keep standing very long.

"Sorry, Haru. I really didn't want to show such violent behavior..."

"Why do you... Show me something like this, Kyouko!"

Or perhaps, could it be that it's bad manners to ask that?

However, I couldn't help but ask.

It's like that, after all? Till now, I was thinking of Kyouko as a human. I don't know nothing about Kyouko as a Nephilim...

"Right... For starters, why don't we talk about our clan?"

While looking from above me, my leg broken, Kyouko told with a serious tone.

"Us, the Nephilim clan, while being from the giant tribe, are a heretic breed born from crossbreeding between humans and fallen angels... In other words, we are incomplete beings that don't belong to either of the two.

Though our ancestors originally barely subsisted in a corner of the Netherworld, that became a good pretext. The persecuted Nephilim were chased off from their territory and ended up migrating to the Human world."

"... Really, to me it seems like other people's problems."

"They didn't have any other way. When I was born, the Nephilim clan had been already chased out of the Netherworld. That's why I don't know what the Netherworld looks like."

"..."

"Neither monsters nor humans, we are in between. If, once again, we had a chance to regain our place in the Netherworld... That would only be by making a contract with a monster tamer and attaining some achievements... Although that's my father opinion."

Kyouko laughed bitterly.

Ah, somehow I'm absolutely pitiable.

Kyouko shouldered the destiny of the entire Nephilim tribe.

On one hand, I felt like I was under a kind of joke... About contracts with monsters, that much I understand. Though maybe I noticed it too late.

"Well, then. Haru... This is the finishing blow. You'll be sleeping soon."

FIUU, the wind blew. The truck was swung mercilessly.

This time I definitely won't be able to evade. When I closed my eyes with resignation...

"You are truly a useless master, indeed."

Silver hair gently brushed by the wind. A dignified appearance.

Opening my eyes, a slender girl had stopped the truck with an umbrella.

"Zonmi!?"

She was Zonmi. Had she blocked this forceful contacting? Her umbrella blown off to nowhere, her arm bent in an impossible direction with a snap.

"Hey, you, is your arm OK?"

"Don't make light of a ghoul. A wound of this degree is only a scratch."

"..."

That's probably true. I don't think she's bluffing.

"I was holding back. Quickly, move from there... Or do you have a plan?"

"... Ah."

I nodded.

What she said back then... I was reminded of it.

I ran. I ran at full speed.

Luckily, it seems like my injured left leg has recovered considerably. Really, I'm grateful of the seemingly magical constitution of my body.

"Ha-Haru... Don't escape!"

She swung the truck downwards.

However, this time I wasn't that scared... I felt an inexplicable calmness.

FLASH!

Moving as nimbly as a cat, Zonmi blocked the descending truck with her body.

"... Thank you."

"It-it's nothing, you don't have to thank me. If you want to repay me, do it with actions!"

I looked at Zonmi, whose skull had sunk; let's keep a secret what those bits that could be seen were.

I sprinted towards the gate. Looking carefully at the crudely piled up trucks, there is a gap I could pass through by bending myself a little. Praying that it wouldn't crumble, I quickly passed through the trucks.

This... It's seems like I won't go home empty-handed.

As I sensed a heavy pressure, I headed to the station as fast as I could.

Though I was curious about the course of Zonmi and Kyouko's battle, nothing good would come for me.

International Monster Association. Though that's quite a suspicious name it has, I couldn't help but feel that it had the key to the problem.

I was running with a speed that wouldn't lose even to that of Melos when he wanted to save Selinuntius[8].

I boarded a train that arrived with good timing.

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[8] Both Melos and Selinuntius are characters of the story Run, Melos!.

After reaching my target destination, I was speechless.

If I thought that it'd be an easily recognizable place... There was the indispensable necessity for a home's dinner table, the local based retail shop "Sakurazaka butchery".

Seriously...? Is this my hometown...?

Looking at "Sakurazaka butchery" like the map told, it was a run-of-the-mill tattered and inconspicuous building. It seems that the International Monster Association's branch office was located on the third floor.

Since I asked... I hope I can get some results.

Filled with anxiety, I went up the stairs. While I was going from second to third floor...

... A pink snake appeared before my eyes.

With its swollen belly, it looked like a never-before-seen species.

Is this... A monster?

Twirling it's tongue, it seemed to be saying "follow me" without words.

What the heck... Could this be some kind of trap?

But, even if I worry, it can't be helped. As if following the snake, I passed through the door of the branch office. Inside there was such a mess that it resembled, for example, a so-called "jumbled bedroom of a college student". There were so many books and documents scattered everywhere that it was difficult to find a place to stand.

Taking a look inside, there was a person collapsed on top of a slightly large desk. It was a woman.

She had long eyelashes on her narrow eyes. A well-proportioned nose. Long, glossy and slightly wavy fair hair.

With an overall composed atmosphere, a person that gave the feeling of an unbelievably pretty young woman.

"You were... Let's see... Chiharu-kun, if I'm not mistaken?"

"That's right, but... Who are you?"

Though having one's own name disclosed gave a tinge of uneasiness... That much was crystal clear.

Knowing my name, this person surely... is somehow related to monster tamers.

"I'm Luka. Everybody calls me that.[9] I'm the monster tamer entrusted with the protection of this area... It's fine if you call it a kind of recognition."

The monster tamer that guards this area... I've heard that there are many IMA branches throughout the world. Could it be that each one has a monster tamer in charge of each section?

"This is the branch office of the International Monster Association, isn't it? Isn't the public information about it a bit too open?"

"That's right. It seems like in the olden days they liked to be a little more concealed, but now it's different. Wouldn't you understand by looking at the situation outside? That's not something you can hide for long."

"... How did the world end up like that?"

"That's what we want to know, Chiharu-kun. Before long, the world will approach an unprecedented crisis. That's why this time we assumed the risk of recruiting a large number of Monster tamers. We expect your participation."

"..."

Though she is talking about a risk, even I knew that she meant the Monster rebellion or the reports.

Softening the traffic through the Abyss Gate that connects the Netherworld and the Human World.

Is that the extent of the risk we must assume...?

"Then, did you want to ask only that?"

".. No, I came here to day to ask something."

"Fu, fu; what do you mean?"

Luka-san showed a captivating smile.

[9] i.e. without honorifics.

I told her the whole story.

My election as a Monster tamer. Being stuck in the middle of a conflict between the Ghoul and Nephilim clans. The scattering sparks of the confrontation those two had just a while ago.

'Ah, this person must be consulted about things like this a lot.'

Luka's attitude while listening to my talk was enough to make you think like that.

However, only a little.

If there was something that piqued my attention, was the manner in which, in the middle of my speech, Luka-san contained her laughter... I wasn't saying anything funny.

"Yeah, I more or less understand... Chiharu-kun is still a child."

"I'm... a child?"

"Yeah, a child. Specifically, the kind of child that eats his hamburger with ketchup."

"What's with that evaluation standard!?"

"Adults eat plain oroshiponzu[10]."

"What, I didn't know!?"

I was worried to be told that my common sense didn't resemble the common sense of the world.

"Then, in the end. Which monster do you choose?"

"Which one... Would it be a problem if I don't choose?"

"Yeah, I'd say a big one. You are seriously a good-for-nothing."

"..."

Those words hurt deeply as if they were arrows.

How do I say it... Luka-san is someone with a mysterious atmosphere.

Rather talkative and loving to joke, it was like her eyes could see through anything as if it were totally transparent.

"Well, why don't you try to change your way of thinking? Which one would you like as a girlfriend?"

[10] A Japanese sauce made of soy, citrus juice and grated radish.

"What's with that kind of twist?"

We're not making any progress... Concluding that, I tried to get right to the point.

"Frankly, I'd like that you taught me a way so that no one gets injured. Please teach me a way so that Zonmi, Kyouko and I will all be happy."

"How sweet. Don't you think you are asking for something unreasonable?"

"... I suppose."

"There's one way."

"There is!?"

Looking at her eyes, I understood. She's like Manami... Someone born under the star of extreme sadism. Perhaps, making fun of people is her only way to have fun.

"However, though it would be fine to teach you, there are conditions. Will you do me a favor?"

Luka-san let out a captivating laugh.

Sincerely, even though I was annoyed because I felt like I was dancing on the palm of her hand, I nodded reluctantly.

"In short words, since about three days from now I want to go on vacation, I'd like you to guard this area in the meantime. Could you? You seem like a reassuring comrade. You see, since while I'm entrusted with this task, I don't have the chance of traveling afar..."

"Wa-Wait a minute! Is it OK leaving that kind of serious duty to other people to do!?"

"Don't worry, don't worry. It's a special situation."

Even when you talk about it incredibly lightly, isn't that quite a serious duty...

"If something important happens like having to guide a newbie tamer, as long as you don't act unstylishly, that's fine. Be at ease."

"A newbie tamer... Hey, I haven't agreed to become a Monster tamer yet..."

"Is that so!?"

Luka-san began to talk like she had just remembered something.

Are you ignoring what I say...?

"I'll kindly give you some advice. As you know, newbie tamers have to choose one out of three monsters given that match their own aptitude, who will become their chosen partner. Do you understand the meaning of this?"

"Eehm, what's the meaning?"

"Right now, there are two monsters before you. Those two were both proposed as choices to you. As far as I know... Should there be one other more?"

"And that one... has yet to appear?"

"You should take that possibility into account. It seems... That your misfortune has only just started."

"... Don't say something ominous that seems like a line from a cancelled manga."

Though I was curious about the words Luka-san had said, I feel we should follow the track we were on for now.

To guard the area while Luka-san is gone... I don't understand well, but should I try to ask Zonmi and Kyouko to collaborate for the time being...?

With my chest filled with determination, I left that place.

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"I'm home!"

"..."

Zonmi appeared when I was changing out of my outdoor shoes at the entryway after returning home.

On top of the worn-out clothes I gave her, for some reason she was wearing an apron, but it was OK.

That's... Supposed to be a gag?

There was a large knife stabbed into Zonmi's forehead.

"Hey... Is your head OK?"

"Wha-Whaaat!?"

Zonmi raised her voice with her mouth open wide.

"What do you mean!? I'm normal, as you can see; don't lump me together with a pervert like you!"

"... No, it's not that. I mean this, this."

"Ah!"

JAM, I extracted the knife that was stuck into Zonmi's head.

If I remember correctly... The one stuck on Zonmi's head was my favorite.

"I mean, how couldn't you notice that you had a knife stuck in your own forehead...?"

When I pointed that out, Zonmi puffed her cheeks.

"It cant be helped, can it!? Since us ghouls don't bear such an illogical system like what's known as sense of pain!"

She rebutted angrily.

No, no, the sense of pain is something important. It's an important signal that our body sends us as an SOS... Though we could say... That ghouls were seemingly immortal from the start, they have no need of such a function.

"Well, who was the one who did such a horrible thing?"

Surely, that must not be self-inflicted.

While I had a hunch about who was the culprit, I had to at least ask.

"It was Chiharu's little sister. I don't know why, but she suddenly stabbed me."

"As expected."

Frightening.

Had Zonmi not been a ghoul, what did she plan to do?

Fiuu... I had been on the verge of shouldering a crime that would have haunted me my whole life.

"Well, I still have many questions..."

"Yes, like?"

"After that, how did you end your battle with Kyouko?"

Though I'm worried by my sister's insurgence, that comes first.

I couldn't see any big injuries on Zonmi's body, with the exception of her forehead, and since she has returned to my home, does that mean she had won?

"I have no excuse. I managed to corner her, but... In the end, she managed to slip out at the last second."

"... Is that so?"

More than enough.

That Kyouko that boasted such a superhuman strength as being able to wield a truck with one hand managed to slip out. Zonmi's true ability is probably more than I expected, though.

"Mmm... Mmmm!"

For some reason, I could hear my sister shrieking.

"Hey, Zonmi... By the way, what did you do with Manami?"

"If you mean your sister, didn't I restrain her with ropes so she didn't act violently?"

"..."

She calmly told me. What are you doing with other people's little sisters, you punk.

When I was about to voice that, Manami appeared tied in a turtle-shell bondage...

"Oo... Mmm..."

She probably tried to mutter "Onii-chan!", but I couldn't understand it due to the towel stuffed into her mouth.

Even if I was curious of where Zonmi could have learnt to tie a turtle-shell bondage when there's no chance for that within a normal lifestyle, right now that didn't matter.

"Wait, I'll help you right now."

"... Please, stop. Once you unbind her, what if she goes on a rampage again? To contain her brutishness, isn't it better to leave her like that?"

"Is my sister some kind of beast?"

Come to think of it, the transfer student introduced herself like that on her first day.

Zonmi truly hates humans...

I thought about that while I removed the towel from her mouth.

This situation... Rather than your run-in-the-mill teasing, somehow I got the opposite feeling.

"... Haaah! O-onii-chan! Who is that!? She didn't die even though I killed her, she's totally weird!"

"Calm down, Manami, aren't you the weird one? For starters, it isn't ethical to kill someone."

I don't know why, but I seem to be surrounded by people without a speck of common sense. Crap, now my head is hurting.

"You zombie girl! Don't get near my Oniiiii~-chan! Scram!"

"I'm not a zombie. I'm a proud ghoul, Zonmi."

Zonmi muttered a complaint.

Ah, of course she'd fuss over that.

"Well, about stabbing kitchen knives in people's foreheads... it's bad, OK?"

"Bu-but sheee~! She came all of a sudden and said 'I'll live together with oniichan'! I won't allow that!"

"Did you say that... Zonmi?"

"Yes. So that something like today doesn't happen again. At least until the end of our agreement, don't leave my field of view."

"..."

Certainly Zonmi could also help me with other things when going out of the house. I don't know when Kyouko will try to make a contract by force again.

"Listen, Manami... We don't have another option. Even though I don't want to go along with that, but the circumstances don't allow us to not live together..."

"Wha-what? You have to cohabit even when you don't want to go along?"

"We~ll, there are some deep issues..."

"Onii-chan... Could it be that she's your sex friend?... That's it! I won't allow it! Kill, I'll kill her! Onii-chan, untie me! I have to kill her!"

"What things are you saying?"

"Urk!"

I poked Manami in the forehead.

As you see, Manami has a tendency to easily go on instant rampage, but if you talk things with her, she has good sense... Though even I wasn't sure if that's really the case.

"Mmmph~~~! Onii-chan, how cheeky. For this, I'll whip you later a hundred times as a punishment."

As I expected, she has always been like this...

"Se-se-se-sex fr..."

For some reason, Zonmi's face was as red as a tomato and muttering something under her breath.

"Hurry, untie me quickly! Onii-chan is being tricked by this demon! I must open your eyes!"

"If I untie you, you shall listen to the circumstances."

"Mmm~"

I unbound Manami's ropes.

I'd wish that once I'm done no more troubles arise, but maybe that's wishful thinking...

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Later. After wasting a whole hour persuading Manami, we went to have dinner. Over the round table there was a menu of karaage accompanied by salad and miso soup that, while simple, suited our tastes.

I was surprised that Zonmi made all of this without help.

Something that was bothering me, it seems that Zonmi was wearing an apron earlier because she was preparing to make dinner.

The sweet oily aroma of the deep-frying greatly aroused our appetite.

"Ooh, this is delicious."

The outside was crispy while the inside was juicy. At the same time, a nice spicy flavor filled my mouth.

"Is that so? I learnt how to make it to suit your tastes."

"Mmm~. Onii-chan exaggerates! When he's in front of a beauty, he just makes a stupid grin! You glutton!"

"If that's so, try to eat too."

Showing her dissatisfaction, my sister threw the karaage into her mouth.

"...!"

"How's it, delicious?"

"Hmph. It's really not a big deal! The food onii-chan cooks is a hundred times more delicious!"

Despite saying that, Manami moved the chopsticks with amazing speed... This fellow's not honest.

Since we have no father and mom has been living overseas because of work forever, I was usually in charge of cooking. It wasn't my intention, but something inevitable.

It's not like Manami couldn't cook... But if I let her, I don't know what she would mix with it. No, I'm not joking.

"That was surprising. Zonmi, you cook really well."

"Of course. That's because to us monsters, food is an indispensable source of magical power."

"Eeh~, so it's like that."

It seems like magic replenishment works like normal nutrition.

"This miso soup, in particular. It doesn't lose to the one I usually make, even though the ingredients are all the same... Huh?"

"That miso soup alone was done by your sister. She stubbornly kept telling me 'I'll make it'..."

What the heck. I had a very unpleasant premonition.

"... Sorry. I'll go throw this out the sink."

"Ah! Onii-chan, meanie! This time I didn't put anything weird!"

"As if I would believe you! You have too many antecedents! Be sincere, have you put anything dangerous in it?"

"I really didn't put anything this time... Well, except for a handful of love..."

"... As I thought, I'm throwing it out."

"Uwaaaaaaaa! Time out, onii-chan! It was 30,000 yen for ten grams! I used up my meager savings to buy it!"

"As if I know!"

I had to take advantage of this momentum to get rid of the miso soup.

"Gyaaaaaaa

"Eh, but school..."

"It ended half destroyed during my battle with the Nephilim. It will be closed for a while."

"..."

I take back what I said.

Police, help! Something big has happened!

My chest is filled with feelings of guilt.

Incidentally, when I looked at Manami, 'Mph!', with her lips pursed, she looked displeased for some reason.

"Hey, in other words, isn't that a date?"

"Absolutely not, why don't you listen to what people say?"

"Liar! Even if you give this or that pretext, isn't that two people spending all day together? That's a date, after all!"

"Ha, ha, what things you say, Manami. Hey, Zonmi, say something..."

"Da-da-date... Date..."

Zonmi was looking down, her cheeks dyed red for some reason.

... Hey, why didn't you deny it.

"Mmmmph. See, like I said! I definitely won't approve it! It's too early to go on a date with oniichan, how audacious!"

"And what would you expect me to do, spending all day sleeping at home?"

Even if I conceded and called it a date, I don't know why I would need approval from my sister.

"I will also go with you. It's only fair."

"Sorry, I don't understand. First, there's no benefit from your tagging along."

"There are benefits."

"Isn't that at best a punchline with something like a low-acidity shampoo?"

"It's not... Or should I say I have doubts of your sense of humor..."

While she threw me a scornful glance, 'Ahem!', Manami cleared her throat and continued.

"Onii-chan, wouldn't it be bad if you somehow ended up shopping for clothes or underwear with this zombie?"

"Wah!"

The moment she heard Manami's words, Zonmi's body twitched.

"Ah~. Now that you mention it, her clothes are indeed worn out. As expected, we should buy her new ones."

"Don-don't worry, I don't need them. These clothes are more than enough."

"... Now that you mention it, it seems that somehow you were able to wear our school uniform, from where did you get that?"

"That... I got it from Luka. She also helped me with the school admission."

"Eeh, so it was like that...?"

I had been wondering till now, but that cleared it.

During the two days I hadn't seen Zonmi, she was at Luka-san's place.

"I mean, you zombie there, do you have a change of underwear? You don't perhaps keep wearing the same, right..."

When Manami asked that with scornful eyes, Zonmi's body twitched like a golden fish out of water.

"Hey... Could it be... You..."

"I-I didn't have another way! I couldn't ask anyone to buy me underwear! I-I simply kept wearing those I like... Hey, Chiharu! Don't look at me with those eyes!"

"Ha, ha..."

This means tomorrow we three will end up going shopping.

Of course, about guarding the area, however... I'm certain even a monk would be worried.

× × ×

Later.

Zonmi decided to take a bath, and meanwhile I secretly slipped out of the house.

My aim was, of course, to see how things were going on at Kyouko's side.

Leaving behind a note that said 'I'm going to the convenience store', I went out.

Right now I could be easily attacked but, nevertheless, I couldn't simply leave it be. Even assuming that Kyouko is a monster, it didn't change the fact that she's my childhood friend.

Walking by the street at night, after a short while I saw Kyouko's apartment. It was made of wood and you couldn't call it nice even as flattery. When I was a kid, I often came here to play, but recently I didn't have many chances to visit.

Will she be fine... that girl?

Don't worry. Even if she gives an impression of stern behavior, she's unexpectedly softhearted...

""Ah!""

While turning a corner on the road, I ran into a jersey-clad Kyouko.

"..."

Kyouko held a supermarket bag. At this hour... Perhaps she aimed for the last-minute discount goods[11] I know since I often also do the same.

"Yo!"

Same as before, There was an awkward mood, but since it was this time, I loudly greeted her.

"What a surprise. You are a shocking idiot... You won't live long."

"Yes, I'm an idiot, did you notice it at last, you idiot?"

Of course it's not like I didn't feel uneasy.

But, right now, I shouldn't leave Kyouko, her eyes full of doubt, alone. That's why,

"Hey, do you want to talk for a bit?"

I made up my mind and broke the ice like that.

[11] In Japan, supermarkets start giving discounts to unsold goods a little while before closing time in order to get rid of them. For more info, go see or watch the *Ben-To* series.

I hadn't been to Kyouko's place since elementary school, it really has been five years.

"Ha, ha, ha, it hasn't changed in the slightest, your house."

"Stop it! It can't be helped if since the start we didn't have many things!"

Kyouko's room had only the necessary minimum furniture, living with a simplicity you wouldn't expect of a girl her age. At school, Kyouko gives a gorgeous impression. If those guys in class knew, they'd surely faint.

"Would you like something to drink?"

"Aye."

"Calpis, perhaps?"

"No, I don't like the calpis you serve here because it's watery!"

Silent kick (omitted).

"Barley tea, please."

"OK."

As we conversed like that, I was relieved.

Good, Kyouko hasn't changed.

At least it seems I don't have to worry being suddenly attacked.

Unintentionally, I remembered the times I came to this house to play in elementary school.

When was it?... Since playing with girls was embarrassing, my relation with Kyouko ended up straining. Also, could it be because of the deep memories this place held?... As this house hadn't changed in the last five years, I felt a strange sense of security.

A while later, Kyouko returned with cups on both hands.

"Say, don't you think I could attack you?"

Muttered Kyouko while lowering her back to the floor.

"Did you plan on attacking?"

"Well. You've seen my battle with that ghoul. There's no reason for that kind of thing. Sorry, Haru, that time... Somehow it ended like that."

"Is that so? That's good. Since I also want my first time to be with the girl I like."

Playing dumb, Kyouko chuckled a little.

"Haru, please look behind for a moment."

"Why so sudden?"

"It's fine."

Being told that, I turned back.

Let me see, I feel that recently things always develop like that... Especially today.

When I turned around after hearing a 'Now it's fine', I found Kyouko had removed her clothes.

Wearing nothing but her underwear, Kyouko's upper body, though unconsciously trembling, gave a sense of earnestness as she said the following:

"I'll show you from now on, my true form."

"... OK."

As soon as she told that, black things clearly sprouted from Kyouko's back.

Covered by thin hair, they became the shape of wings.

It would be difficult to compare them with something of this world, but if you force me to do it, they were closer to bat wings... They weren't things you could call lovely even as flattery. They were eerie wings that stirred up unpleasant and disturbing feelings.

"This is only a part, If you wish I can fully transform. Want to see?"

"No, that's OK..."

Better refrain from that. As what I'm seeing doesn't give a very pleasant feeling, if I see more than that my head will probably hurt.

"Since about when..."

As a shadow covered her face, Kyouko muttered:

"I was aware I wasn't a human ever since I was born... I didn't learn it. It was harsh. Even while concealing my true self, I couldn't become close to anyone..."

"... Why didn't you tell me until now?"

"I couldn't, this form... is revolting, right?"

"..."

I couldn't either deny or confirm it.

While one must be able to solve his own problems[12], I couldn't make an instantaneous decision.

"While it may seem a trifling matter to other people, I often pondered about what kind of person I was. Always wondering for what reason I was born."

"..."

"But, you know? Recently, at last, I had a chance to make good use of this power. That was when I knew Haru had been chosen as a monster tamer. I was glad. If I could display my power for the sake of someone close to me, I thought wouldn't it be a happy thing in the end?"

"Really?"

So she was thinking about those kind of things.

"But it's too late. It may be too late. Today, you know, when I gathered my strength and decided to open my heart, there was already another girl beside Haru. I was scared. I felt she had stolen the place I'd just found... that's why I made a fool of myself. Why did it end up like this?... In addition to this creepy things... I made myself be hated..."

Kyouko looked downwards, droplets dripping from her eyes.

... Now that I think, Kyouko has always been like this.

Really, who was it that she got this bad habit from, pretending to be tough with a composed face... She ends up shouldering all of her troubles alone.

That's why today I'm extremely happy.

This fellow has conveyed her true intentions to me.

I softly put my hand on Kyouko's head and gently stroked her hair.

"Aren't you always causing a ruckus? I got used to it long ago."

[12] The literal translations is "one must finish no matter what laundry", which I take it means "one must solve his own problems, no matter how difficult they are"; if you know an equivalent English expression, feel free to change it.

"But..."

Worried about Kyouko, I said.

"Kyouko, the elementary school graduation album. On the column of our dreams for the future, do you remember what I wrote I wanted to be?"

"... A stag beetle."

Those were records labeled as 'Dark History' on my internal memory folder.

"Correct, they have it good. They are free to eat nothing but watermelon. Moreover, they are cool because they have horns."

"... What do you mean?"

"Don't you understand? My dream hasn't changed since then, I still want to be a stag beetle! That's why, don't worry, your wings are honestly cool. They are not creepy at all."

"... Aren't you stupid. Saying these kind of things even though you are in middle school..."

"That's it, you hadn't noticed until now, stu~pid?"

That day, Kyouko cried.

What's more, they were happy tears.

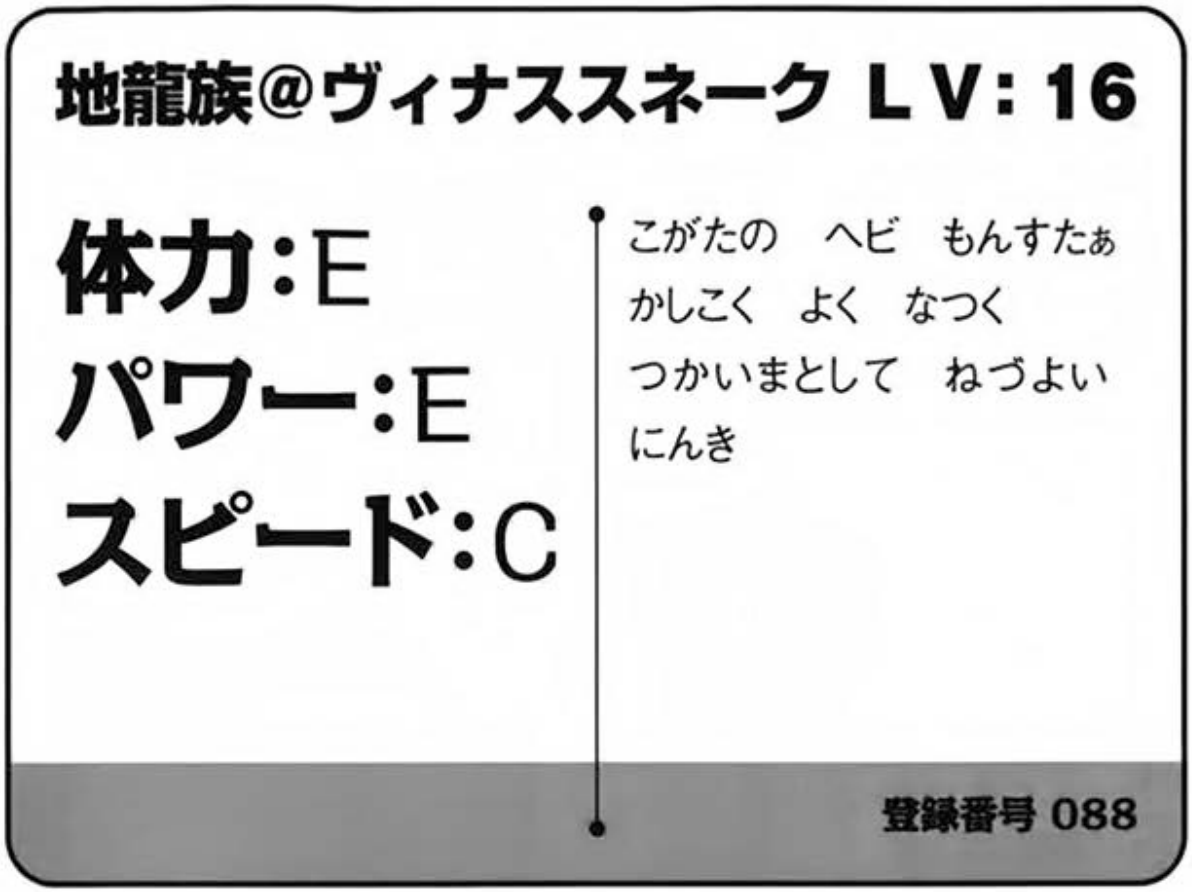
Because of that, I got home late and was severely tied by the two girls awaiting there.

I cried too.

Since those two's punishment honestly wasn't a joke. Saying 'Human, it would be best if you died.', I feel you don't want to know the rest.

Perhaps, I won't forget in my life what happened today.

What I'm saying, I feel this is the most dense time in my life.



Earth dragon tribe: Venus Snake
Lv:16
Physical strength:E
Power:E
Speed:C

Tiny snake monster.
Gets easily emotionally attached.
Very popular as a familiar.
Serial number: 088

Chapter 4 - Dragon Blood

The next day.

We are visiting the shopping mall in front of the station.

We are aiming for the famous underwear shop that carried everything from striped panties to string panties, "Jewelery Lingerie"... I sincerely wondered what was with that naming sense.

This large-scale shopping mall that opened recently in front of the station had become the main dating spot of the area among young people.

On holidays, the building gets crowded with tons of people but, as expected, on weekdays business gets slow. Since our school was just destroyed, we could come at these kind of hours.

A flower in each hand[13].

For my current situation, those were the most appropriate words to describe it.

Walking on my right, my little sister, Manami.

With a camisole that emphasized the bustline and denim shorts. With her legs covered with black stockings tucked inside thick boots, even if she's my sister, that was some refined fashion.

Walking on my left, Zonmi the ghoul.

It seems she borrowed some clothes and underwear from Manami. A miniskirt shortened to the limit and a sleeveless shirt that exposed her shoulders. Wearing heels, that was quite the modernistic fashion. Even though it wasn't raining, she carried her umbrella as usual.

So, since I frankly mustn't enjoy this harem-like situation, I put on a virtuous front to remind myself that they were my sister and a ghoul... I couldn't stand that front.

The people walking down the road openly looked at me with stares filled with jealousy. I couldn't calm down because I was not used to those stares that pierced my back.

"Buu... I hate walking..."

Zonmi sighed.

"That's unexpected. Is that because you are not used to heels?"

"What? Since I went to the trouble of choosing it for you, at least be grateful."

[13] Dating two girls at once.

"... the clothes I got from Chiharu were enough for me."

"No, like I said that's a bit..."

Despite those being my words, I felt so guilty that I ended up coming along.

Since they were so ragged that they were one step short of becoming a dust cloth.

"... I'm not suited for flashy clothes. Don't they say "the right person in the right place"?"

"Is that so? I think they'd suit you."

I don't know much about girl clothes, but I think they should suit her at least a little.

"Wha-wha-wha, You won't get anywhere with flattery!"

Flush, her cheeks colored, Zonmi's voice sounded nervous.

I wasn't trying to flatter you though...

"But that's well~♪ I haven't worn that underwear in a year. Zonmi-san should feel grateful that my bra from middle school second grade fits her~"

Manami said with quite a harsh tone.

Manami is in her third year of middle school, by the way. She is studying extra-hard in order to take the entrance exam for Seiran Academy next year.

It may be an indiscretion as her relative, but I do nothing but wish 'Please, let her fail'.

"Is that true, Zonmi?"

"It's only that your sister has them big, since it's not like... Mine... Are small or anything."

The volume of Zonmi's response lowered gradually towards the end.

"That is, if I have to compare..."

How pitiful.

As her brother, I don't think I should be saying this, but Manami's chest is bigger than you'd expect from a middle schooler. Her style could put a gravure idol to shame.

Though Zonmi's weren't really that small, if you try comparing both of them it can't be helped that it'd be unfavorable.

"Fu, fu~, how is it? Today I tried to choose clothes that were a little bold to please onii-chan."

"What are you saying..."

Honestly, I was stumped about the emphasis my little sister put on her cleavage.

"If I felt something by looking at my sister's chest, it would be bad... Ethically."

"~~~~Gh!"

"Hurts, it huuuurts!"

I got both cheeks pinched. In this I can't feel even a little bit of consideration for a big brother.

"Humph~, onii-chan has no tact! Act like a boy once in a while!"

If I act wrongly like that, it'll mean my death in society.

I was hurriedly dragged into the underwear shop we wanted to go to.

Although I was accompanied by girls, entering this kind of place is of course embarrassing.

A place to buy underwear... I frequently had the chance to see it from afar, but this was my first time actually entering it. It was unknown territory for boys. The utopia yearned for by everyone...

"Onii-chan, what are you doing standing there!? Come in."

"Eh, Wait a minute! I have to enter too?"

It goes without saying that I was interested by what was inside, but even though there weren't any signs prohibiting entry, it wouldn't be socially acceptable to go in as a boy.

"But of course♪ It's meaningless if onii-chan doesn't come."

"Hah?"

"For what reason do you think I came? In order to research what kind of underwear onii-chan likes!"

"... Is that so?"

I worry I'm quite helpless.

I'm always wondering, but how can this one here be my blood-related sister?

While feeling dejected, I stepped into the inside of the shop.

Radiant and sparkling jewels suddenly appeared in my field of vision.

Anyway, I must've made a mistake... I shouldn't have ridiculed the naming sense.

I knelt in apology inside my heart.

Jewelery Lingerie... The sign wasn't lying...?

How can this be women's underwear, this... Could make my heartstrings loudly snap.

They are only clothes. Even so, clothes. How can a single piece of cloth have such sexual charm... Are humans such profound beings to be able to make such things?

After this experience, I was one step closer to the truth of eros.

"Come on, onii-chan! Tell me! What underwear arouses you more!?"

"Hey, isn't that an unusual question!?"

As I chased away my sister who approached while panting heavily,

"Zonmi, choose what you like. It's my treat."

"Is-is that alright?"

"Aye. It's the least I can do after you helped me."

I took a 5,000 yen note from my wallet and put it in Zonmi's hand.

Though I'll have to endure doing without porn magazines this month, I don't regret it. Since I could see this unique superb view. I wonder if that made up for it.

"Well, Zonmi, what underwear will you buy?"

"Is that so? I don't care much about design. If I think about the upcoming battles, of course it should be a sports-type one, but... What kind of things are you asking taking advantage of this confusion!?"

"... Is it bad?"

"Don't look at me with cute puppy eyes! Get out of here right now!"

Hmm, disappointing.

Nevertheless, Zonmi was earnest, or perhaps I should say she was sound. The first thing when choosing underwear is to express your true nature.

"Onii-chaan♪ Don't you think that this underwear with a gap on the crucial spot is also practicaaal?"

"..."

It really shows your true nature...

I don't want to think exactly how you find it practical, though.

Leaving Zonmi aside, since, on the other hand, I didn't want to get near Manami, I reluctantly wandered around the store.

The moment I resolutely walked into the shop, once I did it once, from then on I won't feel reluctance.

As I can legally look at women's underwear, isn't this Heaven?

Oh, this is... Heh, draweeers...? So there are those too.

Like that, I fully enjoyed my first visit to a lingerie store.

"Wait, how can it be I can't try them on!?"

All of a sudden, an out-of-place male voice resounded through the store.

Hey, hey, what the heck has just happened...

Looking about, there was my close buddy — Youhei.

"That's why, this shops forbids male customers from going into the changing room..."

"That's weird! Isn't that sexual discrimination? This is an age where you can wear a bra even if you are a man. And yet the clerk doesn't know these things? Even though I don't want to say such things, even I would file a complaint for that inappropriate attitude."

What is this guy doing on a weekday...

After all, I wonder if he has awoken to a weird fetish that gets him aroused when wearing female underwear?

"Even if you say that..."

"It's impossible to talk with you. Call your manageeer!"

... As his buddy, maybe I have to be kind enough to put up with his eccentricities.

But I can't allow it. I can't mentally endure it, as his acquaintance, I have to make him mind his surroundings since he seems to have no shame.

In the end, I observed what Youhei was doing from the shadow of a pillar.

"... Understood. So, it's seems that this time we have to take special measures... Please, keep it a secret."

"Humm, so you have started to understand what I'm saying? Well then, how about going in after that cute girl there finishes choosing a brassiere to change into?... *Slurp*"

"!?"

I see, so that was Youhei's aim!?

Kuh, you have thought it through, Youhei...

Somehow or other, it seems he hasn't awoken to any weird fetish. What a relief. It seems he's as healthy as usual.

And following Youhei's line of sight...

There was Manami.

"With what kind of eyes do you look at other people's little sisters, bastard!"

"It hurts! Eh... Chiharu?"

I gave him a chop without holding back for looking at my sister with lewd eyes.

"Look, you are troubling the clerk. Scram."

"Eh? Why are you in this kind of place?... Rather, uwaaaah, ouch, ouch. Why, Chiharu, release meeeeee!"

While pulling Youhei's ear, I took him outside the store.

... Goodbye, Jewelry Lingerie.

As a result of a conversation with Youhei, we agreed on a non-aggression treaty called 'Mutual today's events didn't happen'. It goes without saying it meant Youhei's eccentricities, but I also want to hide the truth about the fact that 'I went shopping for underwear with my little sister'.

Thus, prioritizing mutual benefit, we parted ways.

Being befuddled, I sat on a bench before the store.

Embarrassed for some reason, I didn't feel like I could enter the shop again. I'll wait here until Zonmi and Manami get out, then.

"Hum. Beholding it presently, 'tis conspicuously less crowded than usual."

Standing right before me, for some reason there was a girl mumbling under her breath.

What was surprising was that her clothes didn't seem like clothes. She was totally wrapped in what seemed like robes of a dull red color.

From inside her hood, you could catch glimpses of a facial expression full of self-confidence. Eyes concealing a strong will that fascinated the observer. Is she one of those guys that wear color contacts that I've heard of?... Those eyes were as crimson as if they were on fire.

I tried to break the ice, though she looked like she was covered by a rather dignified aura... The surprising thing was that she was extraordinarily short, I'd say around only 140 centimeters.

Charming, isn't it? Is she cosplaying as something?

"What's wrong, have you strayed from your mom?"

I don't think a child this small would've come alone to the shopping mall.

Let me see, where's the Lost Children Center...

"Ku, ku, ku. That utterance, I shall take as a declaration of war. Monster tamer..."

"!?"

I promptly fled from the bench, in preparation for the battle.

Could this fellow be... a Monster!?

"Frightened? I will not deceive thee, since thou art an important human sacrifice, I cannot be cruel."

"You, what are you saying..."

"Make a contract with me, Monster tamer."

"..."

That was a threat I couldn't accept or deny.

I don't know what will happen if I don't comply... Her speech gave the impression of being filled with a strong power.

"Come on, I don't understand what you mean at all..."

As I played dumb, the look of the girl turned sharper than ever.

"Humm. It doth not matter if thou feignest ignorance. Fear not, I know about the little insects that surround thee. If thou feelest guilty, be not concerned if I kill them all."

"!"

Somehow I have the premonition that this situation... is a terrible emergency.

It seems this girl intends to unhesitatingly try the same contract by force that Kyouko did before.

"Don't... think Zonmi and Kyouko cannot defeat you."

"Do not look down on me, human. My name is Iris Scarlet Lindwurm. The strongest bloodline's... red dragon's descendant! There is no monster above me... Dost thou not think that to be a very good reason?"

I recalled my conversation with Luka-san.

Red dragon... Isn't that the third monster following ghoul and Nephilim?

Shit. According to that, this fellow should also be one of those I had to choose from.

"What if... I refuse?"

"Of course, I will seal the pact by force."

As she laughed boldly, she pushed the palm of her little hand against my breast.

"... Gh!"

With the unbelievable power she hid, she sent my body flying in a straight line.

How can this be... I'm flying?

I took a while before I realized my own body was floating through the air.

"Guwah!"

The crash felt as if the sound of the wind had broken my eardrums.

Breaking through the shop's show window, I was smashed to glass fragments.

I felt as though all my bones were broken. I felt so tired I couldn't open my eyes. Totally exhausted, I felt I couldn't even move an inch. Warm blood gushed forth, making me feel like I was taking a bath.

"Ki-Kyaaaah!"

As women started to scream around me, I was welcomed by a bizarre situation.

As expected.

... Since this kind of monster, isn't it something you could only meet in the game world?

Totally covered in jewel-like scales. Sprouting from its body, a pair of big fat wings. Shaped from head to tail like a lizard, glimpses could be caught of canines characteristic of carnivores from the inside of its big open mouth.

A beautiful crimson dragon entered my blurred field of vision.

This chap, it's a red dragon...

Strong. She just called herself the strongest bloodline... Just by facing it, you couldn't feel safe because of the powerful aura that gushed out. Its size was on the order of a small bus, its intimidating air was more of a blue whale-class.

"Hence, thou art invited to my den."

The dragon picked me up with a limb that was small in proportion to its body.

No good... I was about to lose consciousness from the pain...

Like that, the dragon spread its wings and took flight — at that moment.

"Guuuuuuuuuu!"

A scream that seemed to shake the earth — the shriek of the red dragon echoed.

Freed from my binding, I rolled down the ground.

"Be careful. That one there is my partner."

It was Zonmi's voice.

The umbrella on Zonmi's hand pierced the dragon's scales that were as hard as steel.

Again... I've been saved by this guy...?

"Humm. A lowly one of the ghouls..."

Its face distorted in anger, the dragon once again began to float by flapping its wings.

Maybe, if it makes some distance it'll be the end — Zonmi can't fly. An aerial battle would be unfavorable.

Nevertheless, before it came to that, Zonmi leapt. Zonmi's reflexes were as nimble as those of a stray cat. That way she rode on the dragon's back, and then pierced a wing with the weapon she carried.

"Don't escape. You are invited to my territory."

"Guuh", making that dull scream, the dragon was pulled down to ground.

I see, Zonmi planned to make it into a ground battle.

"You certainly may be strong... But, can you display the same power here on the ground?"

"Begone!"

The dragon's big frame received a rush of umbrella strikes.

Even though it wasn't the sky, but the ground, the dragon was quick.

But it was the same for Zonmi.

Zonmi easily parried by rolling away while smiling with composure. It seems like Zonmi has the advantage in a ground battle.

"Tche."

Turning its face, the dragon licked the severe strike on the base of its neck.

"... Oh, my, was that shallow? You have great strength, right?"

When it heard Zonmi's words, the dragon snorted loudly.

"Ku, ku, ku. Thou mayest have dealt a heavy blow... But 'twill have no effect on me."

"But you can say... that this is the end."

Tattata. After judging what the best step was, Zonmi's body danced in high air. A strike like slashing wind coming from the sky.

Like that, the umbrella in her hand pierced the dragon's forehead, or that's what was expected...

The dragon showed a bold grin.

"I have caught thee, little girl."

Horror took place. The dragon was waiting for this chance — Zonmi couldn't freely move her body while in the air...

After opening its big mouth, the dragon spat out scorching hot flames.

"!?"

Zonmi instantly guarded by opening her umbrella.

But, opposing the flames that noisily continued to surge, it seems the umbrella wasn't suited to cover the whole body.

The compatibility was the worst, to begin with. Though ghouls boast resistance against physical strikes close to half invulnerability, as she personally said before, they were weak against heat.

Zonmi's lower half was scorched, and finally her legs snapped off.

"Humph. That was not even an appetizer."

The dragon shifted its gaze to me.

"Chi... Ha... Ru."

Inside my faint consciousness, there was only Zonmi's voice as though clinging to my ears.

× × ×

When I recovered my consciousness, all my body was restricted, attached to a cross.

Is it my imagination? But it seems that recently this kind of pattern has been awfully common...

But first, there was something I was curious about... I don't recognize this place.

I tried once again to survey my surroundings.

It was a capsule where no other living beings could be seen. Thick books were piled up. An anachronistic old-style fireplace.

If he had to liken it to something, 'a witch's room' would strike close.

What bad taste... And yet it was an eerie room.

"Hast thou woken up, human?"

From the door entered a girl I recognized.

Honey-colored twintails. Short stature befitting of an elementary schooler. Sharp crimson eyes that could pierce you. Wrapped in those hood-attached red robes.

The red dragon.

Unmistakeable — the one here is the monster girl that abducted me.

"I woke up to find this situation... That's the worst awakening ever..."

"I apologize for that. Still, it prevents thee from fleeing before mine eyes."

"You too... Need the contract that much?"

"'Tis so."

The girl shortly murmured.

"By the way, since it hath come to this, please refrain from calling me 'you'. Mine esteemed name is Iris."

"..."

I let out a big sigh.

It seems this guy wants the contract as desperately as Zonmi and Kyouko...

Still...

"What a pity, I'm still waiting for the ring. I'm not lying. It currently hasn't been delivered. Though kidnapping seems convenient, isn't it true that you can't seal the pact if you don't have the ring?"

The girl slowly tampered with her bosom.

"By the way, by ring couldst thou be referring to this thing here?"

Showing a bold smile, she took out a silver ring that glowed with a bluish-white light.

Don't tell me this guy...

I had a bad premonition. I couldn't be sure without looking at the real thing, but taking it out with this timing...

"How is that possible?"

When I asked that, Iris started to talk with an expression full of self-confidence.

"Whaat, it's very simple... The monsters around thee be foolish. No matter how many Tamers be around, with no ring, no contract can be made. My fault, I kept watching thy house. I borrowed this thing from the stupid courier."

"..."

I was cheated.

So the early arriving of the ring was delayed because of that...?

"Then, let's make the contract. Wilt thou struggle? Although I might say, don't even think about moving from there..."

"Tsk..."

My limbs were tightly bound, so I couldn't put up resistance.

Iris's little body approached me little by little.

Something cold ran against my fingertip. She had put the ring on my left hand's ring finger...

"... Let me take the opportunity to teach thee something. This ring symbolizeth that master and Monster, both be one. It doth not matter which party wears it first."

Iris continued with a composed smile.

"And after equipping it... Removal is impossible."

On Iris's finger, just when she put the ring on me.

A second ring just emitted a dazzling flash.

I see... That's the proof of a contract... What?

Feeling a rattling electric current passing through my body, I was tormented by a mysterious sensation as if the ring had become one with my body. A short while later, the ring tightly dug into my flesh, and ended up fixed there as if it were sewn.

Indeed. This... seems to be totally impossible to remove.

"Rejoice, Tamer! The contract hath been completed, from now on I and thee be one in body and soul — we'll be eternally together!"

"..."

I was vexed by my powerlessness.

Power.

Strength.

If I was stronger, I could successfully...

I bit my lips with force — my mouth was filled with the taste of iron.

I roared in anger; feeling I had nowhere to go, I could only prowl inside my heart.

"... Do not be riotous, are thou not still in convalescence?"

"..."

"Dost thou worry? I had thee take a secret concoction to make magical power course through thy body. The pain should subside soon... I ask forgiveness for what happened earlier... That... Violent behavior of mine."

"..."

"Oh, aye, dost thou be hungry? I have made arrangements for dinner."

"Don't wanna."

"'T-'tis so?... Thou be still in convalescence..."

"..."

Seeing Iris suddenly going meek, my obstinacy seemed a bit stupid.

Heey! About the contract, it couldn't be helped.

Couldn't I let it slide?...

"Of course I'll eat."

"... Humph."

Iris, looking like she had killed her emotions,

"'Twould have been best if thou hast said that from the start. This is why the beings known as humans... All right, since today is special, let's make dishes with plenty of the legendary cowry... Hu, hu, hu."

While murmuring for some reason, she exited the room.

Fiuu... Let's think positively.

Because now I believe that this red dragon girl... Despite seeming peerlessly cruel, she couldn't be totally heartless.

If I make use of that, I'll surely have a chance to escape... I hope.

With renewed determination, I clasped my hand into a fist.

A short time later, Iris once again entered the room.

She was carrying in her hands for some reason a mysterious-looking pot.

Inside the room drifted a wonderful scent that aroused my appetite.

This scent... What is it? It seemed a mix between tonkotsu and seafood, difficult to describe, and yet very rich... It was a scent that didn't resemble anything I had tasted before.

"Although I think today I was skillful in its making... We-well, I guess something like a human cannot possibly understand the taste of my cuisine."

Iris looked at me with sparkling and somewhat uneasy eyes.

I've just noticed, but I'm surprisingly hungry.

Iris held the dish and started to scoop soup with a ladle.

"'Tis time to feed thee. Be grateful... Hot!"

Could it be because her hands trembled a bit when she served it? It seems she splashed soup on her face.

It was such a funny sight that I unintentionally ended up letting out a laugh.

"Thou, dost thou laugh!? Making fun of me, what recklessness.."

"... Stop the tedious chatter. Feed me quickly."

"... Humph. As I thought, humans are impertinent beings."

... It seems that somehow or other my chance will arrive soon.

Could it be? While clinging like this, eating will be honestly difficult. If I somewhat managed to be freed of one of my bindings, a chance to escape will arrive...

"Even if thou didst not ask, I would have feed thee immediately."

Iris walked a step, dish and spoon in hand, and was still one step away from me.

"Then, open thy mouth quickly."

"... What?"

"I told thee to open thy mouth. Dost thou not want to take thy nourishment?"

Errrrr...

Could this situation by some chance... be that?

That which couples often do on the park? That which, reflexively, makes me want to shoot a rocket launcher at them?

Does this little kid intend to personally feed me?...

Ho-how humiliating! It's Canossa's humiliation[14].

... Damn. Be as it may, my person's restricted position — since we've reached this point, I can't oppose.

I reluctantly opened my mouth.

"Mm... Tch!"

It seems Iris has made a big mistake.

Since she's so short, as I'm hanging, she couldn't feed the soup to me no matter how she tried.

As Iris couldn't reach even standing on her tiptoes, she made a sour face.

As if sighing in relief... As if saying 'what a pity'...

"... Wait an instant."

With an awkward expression, after temporarily leaving the room, she brought a small stepladder and placed it before me.

"This will serve."

"..."

Hey, wait. This guy will go that far to feed me?...

[14] Italian commune where Holy Roman Emperor Henry IV stood three days bare-headed in the snow in 1077 as penance in order to reverse his excommunication.

"Try to open thy mouth once again."

Doing as I was told, I opened my mouth.

The soup was scooped with a faint dripping sound. Iris, standing on a stepladder, brought the spoon to my mouth.

... And then, my mouth was filled with a soup of a rich, mellow, flawless, never tasted before perfect flavor.

"How's that? Dost thou like the flavor?"

"..."

I was speechless.

It was frankly the tastiest soup... no, food I'd ever had.

It was an unknown flavor not sweet or spicy that brought joy to my tongue.

That is, why couldn't I say 'don't feed me this, it tastes horrible'.

As I put a rather puzzled face from the shock,

"Humph, as I thought, doth it not suit the palate of humans?... Well, from the start I did not think that thou couldst understand the taste of this refined cuisine of mine. I, I knew it from the beginning."

"..."

Iris was making a terribly sad face.

"... Nevertheless, this soup will succeed in recovering from this dishonor... I will do my best to not bring harm to Master. Si-since thou hast made a contract with me, take responsibility. So, consume it without leaving anything out."

Iris's face, for some reason, looks like she's about to cry.

"Enough of your boring chatter, feed me asap. This is absolutely delicious."

"..."

When I said that, Iris showed a bright smile like a blooming flower,

"I-Is that so?! Humph, it would seem that even while you are a hopelessly foolish human, your palate is the only finely developed thing?!"

She kept saying things I didn't understand.

As for me, since this soup had a taste that made me want to bring it back home,

"Please, teach me the recipe later."

I simply said that.

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It seems that Iris had somehow mistaken me for a pet or something.

After that, once every thirty minutes, she kept bringing different dishes.

The reason is, each time it was something absurdly delicious without fail, telling her that from the heart she'd say ""T-tis so?" while showing a big smile that spread through her whole face, then she'd exit the room → Once again, the loop of bringing a meal would occur.

Of course I was annoyed by being bound, but I ended up starting to think that this lifestyle wasn't that bad.

Concerned about my injuries, though I was told from the start that I was recovering with the magic power inserted inside my body, that 'secret mixture' thing that Iris said seemed to be effective, I felt even healthier than before. However, a chance to escape didn't come at all. Worried about that, Iris stubbornly guarded me to a ridiculous extent.

"I have brought thee the dessert course."

Iris came in. This time there was a jelly-like thing on the dish.

Now, I wonder how this next will taste.

Though, it's a shame. I can't seriously think about how to escape.

Iris stepped on the ladder and scooped the jelly with a spoon.

"Quickly, open thy mouth."

"... Say, can I ask you something?"

Know your enemy, know yourself, and you need not fear the result of a hundred battles[15] — I tried to break the ice with resolution.

"Iris, why did you want to make the contract that much?"

Zonmi and Kyouko said they needed the contract to protect their honor.

However, for some reason, I couldn't help feeling that Iris must have a different motive.

"... 'Tis but a simple purpose. I need strength. For that now I wish for even a little more magic power."

"Why do you fuss that much about power?"

"For revenge."

I was shocked by the unusually serious circumstances Iris muttered.

"I-I see..."

"Don't pry anymore than that. Thou dost not want to get scalded."

"... Understood."

She has some secret circumstances.

It would be tactless to interfere with her privacy, let's stop here.

"..."

"... In any case, sooner or later 'twill be exposed... Dost thou want I specially tell thee?"

"You'll tell me after all!?"

"'Twas around... Five years before now..."

[15] Sun Tzu, **The Art of War** - Chapter 3.

"Such a languorous story start!?"

"THOU ART NOISY AND THOU ART DISTRACTING ME, BE SILENT."

Let's reflect a bit.

"Yes."

"Dragon hunting — At the Netherworld, the 'Dragon Blood' with the effect of drastically increasing magic power fetched extraordinary high prices — Among them, the blood of us, red dragons, was exceptionally rare.

And at the center of it all, abominable tamers — The 'Black Tamers' company... Yonne lads set up a trap for my clan with vulgar methods, then exterminated them all — I was but a child at the time, but I barely managed to keep my life.

Even now people have not ceased to pursue my blood. Therefore, I must gather strength. Strength to protect my person together with strength to destroy my foes..."

Eh.

Wait a moment, I don't understand what you mean.

"Are you bloody joking? Isn't the job of the Tamers mediating between humans and monsters!?"

"Because there are a variety of tribes of monsters — it's the same for humans. If there are those who love justice, there're also those who perpetrate crimes."

"..."

I didn't know.

I thought beyond doubt that as Monster tamers, they were only allies of justice that protected humans.

But the reality is different. There are also those truly evil people...

"Sorry for those... Wossname."

"... What mistake hast thou made?"

"What, you say... Weren't us humans those who killed all of your clan?"

"... Pff."

Iris boldly laughed.

"'Twould have been rather allaying if all humans were like thee... With more fools like thee, mine outlet for anger'd be in peril. Those words are enough for now, Tamer... Still, forgettest not those feelings. I only hope thy heart will not be dyed black."

"Hey, where are you going!?"

As her footsteps faded, I tried to stop Iris.

For some reason, I felt she shouldn't leave.

"The contract is complete... My destination has been decided. From here on, let's begin my requital. Thou must continue to bestow magical power on me from here."

Her golden hair fluttering, Iris left this place.

In those eyes, along with hatred, there was only a little tinge of sadness mixed in.

I was confused by my own feelings.

I want to become part of Iris's strength — am I softhearted for thinking like that?

However, I couldn't let her go. I felt that if she went, she would rapidly become unable to return.

Also, I really needed to go to the toilet.

If it keeps up like this, I'll also pass a point of no return.

Somebody help me, please...

"So. It seems that boy has finally made contact with the red dragon... Yes, understood. If something more happens, please contact us."

At the time, Luka got in touch with a subordinate as she sat on the rear seat of a car.

The black car she was riding in ran at high speed as if splitting the darkness apart.

"... Surprisingly, you seem glad."

Promptly seeing through his master's mood, the male driver in butler clothes murmured.

"Oh, is that how I look?"

"Yes. It seems the time has come for the young lady to scheme something bad."

"Something bad... is it? Perhaps, to him maybe it'll be an unprecedented catastrophe."

"Young lady. I'll state my concerns. From now on, it would be best if you cut ties with that boy."

"And why is that?"

"... He may ruin everything."

"Ruin everything... you say?"

As she kept ruminating the meaning of those words,

"Would you protect me if it comes to that?"

"... Yes, of course. Even in exchange for my life."

The man's voice as he stated that without a tinge of hesitation, gave a feeling of bottomless resolution.

... Then, whatever happens.

Kusumi Chiharu. To us, will his existence become the light of hope or the prelude of despair?

That's something only God knows.

Because of that, no matter how far back you look, there won't be any precedents.

While being human, a chimera that carried the blood of monsters, he became a Monster tamer...

If this fake-sounding information ends up being true, his potential ability would be inestimable.

The currently arranged series of riots seems not to be planned to measure him, but as a test case.

"Maou's kid, the king of the Tamers, aims to be a Maou... does he?"

Could there be something better than this? She didn't hold back a broad smile.

"... Even mastering the second rank isn't a dream."

Originally an impossible forbidden combination. 'Double Meaning'.

While gently stroking her nearby snake familiar, Luka celebrated in her heart the yet unseen future.

Chapter 5 - That resolution

"Chiharu, are you OK!?"

Five seconds before my bladder was seriously about to explode, Zonmi, Manami and Kyouko entered the room by smashing the door open.

Right now I don't care how they knew about this place.

Good. What nice timing! I'm saved!

"You girls... Have you come to save me?..."

"Naturally. I have no excuse for suffering such an embarrassing defeat against that dragon earlier. But now that's all right."

"Good grief. When I heard that Haru had been taken captive, I doubted my ears."

"Even Kyouko... What the heck happened?"

"I brought her along. If we are going to confront a dragon, isn't it better to have even a bit more battle power?"

Manami laughed with innocence.

My little sister Manami and my childhood friend Kyouko — the relationship between the two of them seemed surprisingly good, it looks like Kyouko was personally teaching Manami at some place I didn't know of.

Even though I was curious about how Manami knew about Kyouko, right now, more than that...

"Quickly unbind these ropes! I'm in trouble! It's a state of emergency!"

"""!?"""

The instant I yelled that, they entered in panic.

"The dragon! If you have returned, show yourself!"

"Step back, little sister. This is our duty."

Umbrella and halberd. Zonmi and Kyouko held those weapons in preparation to battle.

"Fu, fu. Draw back, newcomers. 'Cos the one that will protect brother is me. I will finely chop that dragon!"

Manami dual-wielded huge kitchen knives that looked like they had blades of 40 cm.[16]

Eh, how come even you can nonchalantly make a cool pose?

Or rather, where did you purchase those things!? Isn't that a flagrant infringement of the Swords and Firearms Control Law!?

"No, it's not that..."

The danger... is the pressure of liquid in my bladder...

Shit, this situation... It's extraordinarily difficult to tell them...

"What do you mean it's not that... Chiharu!? What's with that ring!?"

"It's a long story, but I... was forced into a contract with that red dragon against my will..."

"Fufu~n, a ring on your left ring finger~♪ Onii-chan, you've gotten engaged without Manami knowing! ... Well, who's the girl?"

"Forget that! Hurry up and unbind me. If not, I'll..."

"What's with that!? Chiharu doesn't learn! Is there something more important for us monsters? Irresponsible..."

As Zonmi raised the umbrella in her hand — at that instant.

In the end my bladder surpassed its limits.

Making a nice *whoosh*, I stained my trousers yellow.

Nooooo, don't looooook!

I peed, I peed myself! Stooooooooop!

Waaaa

""..""

The monster girl combo glared at me as if they had seen something filthy.

No, but isn't that actually filthy?

I don't know why, but my sister's bloodshot-eyed stare gave me an 'as I expected, that's my sister~' strangely deeply moving feeling.

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"Isn't it better not caring about it? That is, I don't like careless people, but... Since I used to have the same problem... Was it 15 years ago?"

"What a surprise. This development is more screwed up than I predicted... Lucky I had already crossed my fingers[17] that Chiharu didn't become a monster tamer."

"Mufufu, Onii-chan's pee-pee..."

Facing my foolishness, those three's reactions were varied.

There aren't many spots to play the straight man...

I mean, today's was such a disgrace that could eternally revoke my position as the straight man.

I wanna die.

If there were a hole, I'd continue digging it until I reached Brazil.

For now, I'll rinse my trousers and pants and then dry them at the fireplace.

It's good that there's a fireplace... I wouldn't want to return home with my trousers dripping wet.

Incidentally, since I came across a cloth of a correct size right in the middle of the room, I tied it around my lower body like a pareo. It seems I have to endure it for about an hour.

[17] In Japan, kids cross fingers (engacho) to ward off from filth, and grown ups also cross their fingers, like in the West, to ward off bad luck. I suppose the name comes from the portuguese *engancho*, meaning "hook" or "hooking".

"... Hey, is it true that I can't remove this ring?"

"The answer is both 'yes' and 'no'. At least, the tamer cannot one-sidedly cancel the contract."

"... If it's the opposite, it could be?"

"Yeah, the monster is granted that legitimate right. If it feels the master is not an appropriate one, it can void the contract at any time."

"..."

Well, if it wasn't like that, there wouldn't be any benefits for the monster when forcibly making a contract. Isn't that only natural?

"Then, what do we do after this, ghoul?"

"... For the moment, let's try to consult with Luka. If we try to conceal this matter, the IMA could misunderstand it. If that's the case, providing rings for us two — maybe they could approve an exception."

"I think it will be difficult, though. It doesn't seem those straight-laced people will acknowledge an exception."

"Hey. Were both Zonmi and Kyouko acquainted with the IMA since before?"

"Shut up, Manneken Pis[18]!"

"...OK."

Since I didn't have a rebuttal, I shrugged.

"In the first place, according to the laws approved by the IMA, in order to travel between both worlds, you need their authorization. That means there are no monsters that don't know them."

What's that... They have a Constitution?

Did those kinds of questionable laws exist with me being unaware?

"But, hey, in any case I too agree with raising this with the IMA. Though it seems unlikely, we can't give up before trying something."

"Then, once again, let's return home and ask for another ring. Here it stinks of piss."

"..."

[18] A statue of an urinating kid on a fountain at Brussels.

Aren't all of them becoming more and more mean?

... But, I have lost. I'll have to overcome many times this kind of adversity.

"Hold your horses!"

I said raising my voice a bit.

No matter what, I couldn't ignore something she said when she left from my head.

"The dragon that kidnapped me... That kid called Iris, I'm... worried about her. She may fall into unforeseen problems. That's why, I'm thinking on going to see how she's doing."

"You'd like to go see?"

Zonmi threw me a glance as cold as ice.

Gueeh.

As I thought, did I end up being hated?...

That's right, after all I'm the Manneken Pis. I can look the 1,000 yen note's Noguchi Hideyo[19] in the eyes... Ha, ha, ha.

"... Why are you feeling down? You can summon her... Since you have already made a contract."

Grumbled Zonmi while sulking a bit.

Summon.

I think Zonmi said something like that before.

I didn't realize — Monster tamers can invoke their contracted monsters any time they like.

"Weeell... How do I do that?"

"Bring the ring to your lips and chant 'Summon'."

"Fine, understood... Summon!"

Nothing happened even though I chanted... A blunder?

"Summon! Summon! Summon! Summon!"

"... How weird. In a contract it's normally possible..."

[19] Japanese neuropathologist that discovered the neurosyphilis pathogen and is shown on the 1,000 yen bills.

"Mmm~, could she be outside the summoning range? Or maybe Haru's magic power's dimmed?"

"... Both possibilities seem low. Since to get outside of the summoning range, you should at least go overseas, and it looks that Chiharu's magic power is full throttle — no, it seems to have increased instead since the last time we were together."

"Certainly strange... As far as I can think, the only possibility..."

"A 'Catch Net'?"

A term I didn't recall to have heard suddenly appeared.

"... What's that 'Catch Net'?"

"It's a man-made tool — an illegal item that traps the catched monster and prevents its invocation by means of summoning... But that possibility is also low. The use of 'Catch Nets' has been forbidden amongst monster tamers. Since there were some tamers that employed them with evil intentions."

"!?"

The next instant, a chill ran down my spine.

It could be. If Iris was chasing tamers that participated on that 'dragon hunting'...

"Say, is there another way to look for Iris's whereabouts?"

"It's possible for fellow contractees to discern each other's location at any time."

"And how do I do that?"

"Narrow your eyes while thinking about your contract partner."

"OK."

I narrowed my eyes as I said that.

Then, something like a faint line of light appeared.

"As that magic power thread connects both rings, I suppose that if you follow it, you'll meet. But be careful, since if the line is thin and brittle, the magic power of the partner will decrease."

"..."

What's with this?

The thread that comes from the ring was so thin that looked like it could snap any moment.

"Hey, I have to tell you something..."

I told the girls all that happened until Iris departed.

"I see, the ringleader behind the 'dragon hunting' five years ago — if it's him, there's a possibility he could be using 'Catch Nets' without permission. If we assume the worst case scenario..."

"Iris could have been captured."

"Most probably, it's like that."

Shit, that Iris... It was rash to go alone.

"I think we should go help her."

The moment I said that, the two monsters showed surprise.

"You, could you explain what you mean by that? If our reasoning was spot on, our opponent is a very strong evil tamer with a career of at least five years... To march into enemy camp without thinking is suicide!"

"... Acknowledged. Even so, I can't let her die without doing anything."

That chick... Iris, how could I have fun while she's left without blood or tears by an evil tamer. Reality isn't like that. It was only for a short time, but I could experience Iris's kindness. I can't agree to see her die without doing anything.

"First, I want to confirm something."

Zonmi said with a serious tone.

"Chiharu... Is your resolution the real thing? This battle will be different from anything until now. In the battles for the contract 'till this moment, your life was barely assured... However, this time is different. The decision that you won't regret it even if you lose your life — does Chiharu have that?"

"..."

That's right, it's as Zonmi says. Surely, this battle is different from those until now.

A small error of judgement could become a big crisis. Our lives would literally depend on it[20]...

However, we have to do it!

My reticence has long since gone far away.

It's too late to hesitate.

"...Aah!!"

After thinking for a bit, I raised my head.

Those two showed shocked smiles.

"Haah... Things like getting himself killed when going to rescue his partner... What a naive guy... But, well, Haru's softheartedness isn't something new."

"On that, I also agree... I still have some debt to repay[21] to the red dragon. I'd regret it if she died like that."

"... Is that OK, even though it's totally my selfishness?"

"Don't look down on us. We already knew about our master-to-be Chiharu's character."

"Well, we're about to board that boat~[22]"

"Girls... Thanks..."

I have good companions.

Anyhow, I had already made a contract with Iris. That resolution overcame any thought of giving up. It seems that I didn't have to worry about these girls. Wait, hey?. Ain't I forgetting about something important?

...

...

I noticed the source of the uneasy feeling.

[20] "Big crisis" is written in japanese as "life's crisis"
[21] i.e. take her revenge.
[22] Idiom meaning all of them will soon be on the same side, suffering the same things.

"Come to think of it, I wonder where Manami has gone."

I tried to survey my surroundings, but my little sister's shape was nowhere to be found.

"... How weird, she was next to me a while ago."

"Hey, which reminds me, haven't Chiharu's pants disappeared?..."

"..."

What the heck. I have a nonsensically bad premonition...

Over the fireplace... A farewell letter? I tried reading the written contents.

Sorry. I was so horny I couldn't help but steal them. Don't look for me.

Manami

"Guhaaaaaaaaaa!"

"Danger! Haru has broken!?"

Overcome with anger, I promptly tore the letter in little pieces.

"Why has my little sister acted so idiotically right when we were in a serious mood!?"

"I don't know. I'd be troubled if you asked me..."

Zonmi made a face of utter disgust.

"Though I don't want to tell her how serious the moment is."

Kyouko's statement was painfully too spot-on.

"... I have been wondering since long ago, but Chiharu's sister is really weird. She's abnormal."

"... Well, that's because at Haru's place there are a lot of complicated family circumstances."

"Aaaaaaaaah."

Shit, because the situation was like this I let my guard down[23].

I couldn't let my home's laundry (especially underwear) remain long inside the washing machine. Because my sister is like a crow looking for garbage.

"Well, since anyway we couldn't follow little sister, it's all right."

"Since were she here, we absolutely couldn't ask her to come with us. If your dirty pants have saved Manami-chan's life, that's cheap."

"..."

Manami-chan's life and my dirty pants have the same value?...

How can that be? What a pitiful fellow, my sister.

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Going outside, the first thing that came into my field of vision were luxuriant and abundant trees.

Since one could see the ground gently sloping, it seems like this is the top of a mountain.

There were no traces of humans living nearby. As the leaves obstructed the light, it was overall a gloomy and unpleasantly humid place.

"A beautiful place, as always; though I can't stomach red dragons, their sense for choosing a place for their den deserves praise."

"Is, is that so?"

It seems this is a comfortable place for ghouls.

"Which reminds me, how did you locate this place?"

I asked the question that was bugging me.

Since a place this remote cannot be found by searching at random.

"That's because Chiharu's sister... No, let's better stop with that."

"Eh. What's with that disturbing way of talking!?"

[23]状況が状況だったから油断していた

"Haru, don't you think that in this world there are things you'd be happier not knowing about?"

"..."

Kyouko admonished me.

Since imagining it was terrifying... I stopped thinking about it.

"Eeerrr, then, let's get out of here."

We knew our destination.

We only had to follow the red string that stretched from the ring. Why don't we take a taxi once we climb down this mountain?

Nightfall was slowly approaching... We don't have time to rest.

"What a difficult problem. As the quickest means of transportation depends on the destination, we can't decide immediately."

"But, well, in any case we need to descend the mountain... Do we climb down?"

"Wait!"

The one who stopped us on going down the slope was Kyouko.

"I don't think that's a good idea."

"... What's the matter, Nephilim... Eh, wai... Wha-wha-wha-what!?"

Zonmi's bewilderment was not unreasonable.

As if she had thought something, suddenly — Kyoko took off her clothes.

"I misjudged you, Nephilim... Even you are a pervert..."

"... Saying it like that, anyone who hears you will think I'm a pervert."

"Doesn't saying it with no pants on take away your credibility?"

She hit where it hurt.

As I'm now suffering from the disgrace of having my pants stolen by my little sister, I'm currently in the highly-praised "going commando" state. To me, it takes away all the solemnity that should have been present before a decisive battle. If I go out without wearing pants, of course I can't calm down.

No, it would be a problem if I could calm down.

"It's only this much, let's be calm. Si-since Haru has seen me many times, I'm accustomed!"

"..."

Why do you say it in a way that can lead to misunderstandings...

Like throwing daggers from her eyes, Zonmi glared at me with her dead fish-like eyes, grinding her teeth and without saying anything.

"Heh. Humph, was it like that, so? Well, I don't mind it in the least. I already knew about the improper relationship between you two."

"If you don't mind it, put on a more normal face! And also, we don't have any improper relationship!"

I've said it many times.

We're only normal childhood friends.

"But, am I not still embarrassed?... Showing everything, it's the first time."

As she ended up in her undies, Kyouko's body was wriggling.

Hey, wait. Could this fellow... Be undressing completely...

"Stop, wait! As I expected, going further... You absolutely can't! If I undressed like that, I wouldn't be able to keep living!... Bu-but I don't have anything to show."

No... I certainly saw Zonmi's nude figure, but since she was in ghoul form, does she think it doesn't count?

Then, the next instant.

Kyouko's body became black and gigantic.

I see, Kyouko intended to do that from the start...

A giant with wings growing from its back — a body length of maybe around 8 meters[24]?

Peeking out from within its robot-like mask there were sharp eye glints. A jet black coat as if clad with shadows. Its hair that had changed to peach pink and seemingly long enough to reach the waist was of a charming color.

[24] Around 26' 3".

That appearance, rather than a giant, was more fitting to be described as that of a devil or fallen angel.

... This is a Nephilim. Kyouko's true form?

"Ho-how is it? Revolting, as I thought?"

Said Kyouko transformed into a Nephilim.

"Absolutely not, I think it's absurdly cool."

It was not a lie.

It sure is eerie, but this dark feeling appeals to my chuuni[25] soul.

"... Thank you. If you ride on my back, I think I can transport us to our destination... But it's the first time I've tried this."

"Eeh, how amazing."

"A giant that soars through the sky — Nephilim. It's my first time seeing one, but you sure have been hiding a lot of magical power..."

Zonmi muttered in admiration.

A flying giant? It's certainly very unusual.

[25] From "chuunibyou" (eigth grader syndrome), name given to a certain personality disorder that appears mainly among junior high schoolers, characterized by a strong rejection of reality; the sufferers are usually convinced that the have powers and/or that there's some kind of large-scale plot that only they are aware of.

And in addition to that, superhuman strength enough to lift a truck with a single hand. Thinking like this, isn't Kyouko a considerably strong monster?

"The ghoul has picked up my clothes, right?, since I wouldn't like it if Haru had picked them up."

"Oh, now that you mention it, where have you put Kyouko's panties? Perhaps they got ripped in the earlier mix-up..."

Taking a peek just to be sure, I couldn't find anything like that on Zonmi's hands.

"When Chiharu opens his mouth, it's only 'panties'. Isn't there anything other than panties in your head?"

"It-it's not like that!"

Having said that, it surely feels that recently I've been repeating 'panties, panties' with an abnormal frequency.

If I'm not careful — Won't I be treated as a pervert?

"Since I assumed from the start that today I'd be involved in many ruckuses, I put on underwear made from 'Magical Silk'."

"Mm, What's that?"

"'Magical Silk' — It's a specially made cloth that won't be torn even when changing from human to monster. It's very popular among female monsters in the Netherworld."

"Eeh, there's something like that?"

"Then, hurry up and get onto me. Since I can't go very far with this form."

Following the instructions, we rode on Kyouko's back.

The lack of seatbelts was worrisome. While praying that we didn't get thrown off, I clung to Kyouko's shoulder.

"... Hey, but isn't it weird? Usually, isn't keeping human form what consumes magic power?"

Suddenly, I remembered what Zonmi said to me before.

"That depends on what the base form you live in is. In my case, since I usually keep human shape a lot, this one is more tiresome."

"Eeh, looks like there are many kinds of monsters."

And, at last, Kyouko flapped her wings and began to fly.

"Well, here we go. Hold on tight."

Our bodies were pushed up by an intense buoyancy.

Uoh... We're flying for real...

Gaining altitude quickly, before long we could take in the whole area.

"Ha, ha... This is fantastic! I'm... impressed. Kyouko, you are truly amazing!"

"... For that, thanks. I'm glad to be employing the power of a monster for the sake of others..."

"Humph, how come you say things like that after growing wings?..."

Zonmi seemed somehow displeased as she pouted.

Chapter 6 - The time of the final battle

After thirty minutes of flight, we managed to ascertain Iris's whereabouts.

As aerial transportation had the advantage of not being caught up in hindrances such as traffic lights or congestions, our actual velocity went up.

"This is Yokohama's harbor..."

In the harbor's scenery seen from the sky, there weren't any signs of life among the rows of large warehouses.

I see, this is the most suitable place to hide somebody.

"Chiharu, where does the thread connect to?"

"Mm, there!"

The thread seemed to be connected to one of the biggest of the warehouses.

"Well then, we're landing!"

Kyouko slowly lost altitude. I realized that her flying skills have improved remarkably in this short time. Frankly, we almost died at the start.

Immediately after Kyouko's feet reached the ground Zonmi and I jumped from her back.

"Fiuuu, like I thought, the ground is the best."

The trip through the sky was good, but also too thrilling. I didn't feel safe.

"Isn't it!? Isn't it!?"

"Why do you look so happy?" retorted Kyouko in shock to Zonmi, who was smiling from ear to ear.

"Good, then, shall we go?"

"Be careful, please. There are signs of monsters in the vicinity."

"... Understood."

I braced myself once again.

I'll reiterate, our opponents are the atrocious tamers that exterminated Iris's clan. From here on, a little mistake could cost us our lives.

"Wa-wait! Don't go yet. I'm putting on my clothes!"

Looking back in confusion, Kyouko was in the middle of changing. She had changed shapes from Nephilim to human.

"Eh, why have you changed back?"

"... Don't look here."

"So-sorry..."

Though I was already tired from seeing Kyouko's panties.

"At your limit, already?... You couldn't keep your transformation more than that."

"Is that it?..."

This could be a little bad.

If Kyouko couldn't participate in the battle, Zonmi was our last ray of hope. Though we didn't know the extent of the true power of our enemy, won't it be quite the unforgiving battle?...

"Chiharu, let's go... Don't worry, since I won't lose."

As if reading my thoughts, Zonmi muttered reassuringly.

So it's like that. That's what I have to do when I grow weak-hearted.

After reaching this point, we can only fight at full power!...

SPLAAAAAASH!

"Chiharu! Behind you!"

"Good grief. Speak of the devil!"

A geyser of water sprayed with vigor.

Turning around in a rush, what appeared from the sea — was a giant squid monster.

The threatening squid monster was emitting a jet-black aura.

"Wha? I mean, haven't I see this guy somewhere..."

I had an intense recollection of this monster.

"It's a kraken of the sea beast tribe... I dare say it's the same individual we saw some time ago on television."

So it was that. It's the guy who was broadcasted on the TV news the day I met Zonmi.

I see. I remember that the place they showed then was Yokohama.

But wait a minute, wasn't the squid monster from back then killed by a monster that came around? What is this guy doing in this place?

"Look, the black magic power that wraps this child... It's under 'Enforce'!"

"Wait, what's 'Enforce'?"

"By means of an item illegally manufactured by people with ill will — the 'Enforce Ring', they bring the monster to a state of forced submission."

"There's such an item...!?"

"Yeah. Different from the normal 'Contract Ring'[26], this is the most illegal of illegal things. Put under one-sided command, the monster loses its freedom."

I think I understand.

While on a normal contract the monster stands as an equal, under 'Enforce' it's treated as nothing more than a slave.

And, the next instant.

"Uoh!?"

The squid tentacles that bent like whips grasped us three tightly.

"Uoooooh!?"

Looking closely, the squid's overall length reached twenty meters — huge to a bizarre level. It's beyond comparison to the greatest of the monsters I've met till now.

Or, how should I put it, this situation... is quite bad.

Is it OK that we were so easily caught!?

[26] BTW I've been translating all this time 契約 as "contract", since it's the direct translation, but anytime a forced reading appears, including this one, it says "contact"; I don't know if this is intended or a mistake by the author, but if you think this is intended, feel free to change all "contract"s to "contact"s.

And in contrast to my panicking, those two's facial expressions were still composed.

A premonition rose through my mind like a cork submerged in water... Could these two have been caught on purpose?

Instantly.

"Taaaa!"

"Hah!"

With movements too fast for my eyes to follow, those two tore the squid's tentacles to pieces.

"... Good grief, what reliable fellows."

If I tried to do the same thing, I'd have been powerless before the squid's slippery tentacles.

"Until when will you remain carelessly caught!?"

Zonmi's umbrella cut up the air.

Slash. The tentacle that restrained me was splendidly cut in two.

"Chiharu, please get down!"

"...Uoh!"

Once my feet reached ground, keeping my distance, I watched over those two's appearances...

Let's cool our heads. Right in front of me there are those two's enticing legs. A glimpse of that is the very best.

And in these circumstances, it seems this squid rascal is no match against Zonmi and Kyouko.

But.

It seems like my thoughts were too naive.

The enemy was not that weak. It had an astounding restoration ability. The torn up tentacles regrew immediately, and that in merely seconds. Its restoration ability is of a very high level.

"... What should I say to this!?"

To the panicking me, Zonmi said with indifference.

"This is no more than an hypothesis, but... I dare say the tentacles are but a decoy. Any time you cut them, they are regrown with magical power. And, in fact, you can't get close to the real body without facing the tentacles before."

"That's... In that case, what the heck do we do?"

Anyhow, the squid has ten tentacles.

We number three — no matter how I think of it, I don't feel we can get next to the main body.

"It can't be helped. Leave this to me."

"!?"

The one who said that was Kyouko.

"What the heck will you do?"

"If I throw all the surroundings at it, even this guy will eventually be exhausted. Luckily, there's no lack of things to throw inside these warehouses. Perhaps, my defeating this guy will we worthless."

"But, Nephilim, will you be OK? Isn't your magic power almost depleted?"

"Don't worry. Rather than that, to the me right now, I think this guy alone will be no match... Even though it's vexing, I'll take care of this guy here that's releasing this awfully unpleasant magic power... Ghoul. I leave it to you."

"If I come back and you're collapsed after exhausting all your magic power... Please spare me that outcome. Since we haven't yet settled our dispute."

"Ha, ha, that's my line!"

Contrasting with the cynicism mixed into their conversation, they did a high five with refreshing expressions.

By some kind of female bonding, it seems they have awakened to a strange camaraderie.

"Let's go, Chiharu, our foe is very near."

"Aye!"

Feeling gratitude towards Kyouko, we left that place behind.

× × ×

There was more darkness than expected inside the warehouse, it doesn't seem like there are many people.

There were containers loaded with miscellaneous cargo lined up. They were probably varied articles scheduled to be exported overseas.

When I looked from the sky, the thread surely reached inside here.

There's no mistake... Iris should be very close to here.

We should proceed to the interior with caution.

"Ahaha. How unusual to have guests here."

As we thought we heard a man's voice, suddenly the lighting installed on the ceiling illuminated a nearby position.

We unintentionally squinted our eyes. Who the heck is the one who did this... And.

"Iris!"

Hands and feet bound by thick ropes, Iris tied to a pillar entered our field of vision.

Dishevelled golden hair. Bare skin covered with injuries.

Her face, lacking the ambition of before, looked pale.

"Foolish one... Why art thou here..."

Judging from her hoarse tone of voice, she seemed to be quite weakened.

"How weird~. As the Kraken should have been standing watch, how can you people be here?"

It was an unpleasant voice.

Standing right beside Iris was a man with long hair.

Clad in a black suit from head to toe.

The arrangement of his features was uncanny, but his very long bangs gave the feeling of an annoying narcissist. His age, maybe in his early twenties? Saying it straightforwardly, he was an extremely disgusting man.

"I've been wondering for some time... Why do you do these mean things? Do you understand how grave a crime a contract that disregards the free will of the monster is? If it gets leaked to the IMA, it won't end well."

As Zonmi spoke with an emphatic tone, the man showed a composed smile.

"What a problem~. Since I don't feel like letting you escape from under my nose. That aside, I want to have a chat with that tamer there."

"..."

Shaken by the sudden change of topic, I was left without words.

"You should be a 7th generation rookie. You got to choose a red dragon. Amazing, the best! I now understand what the boss said! What outstanding talent do you have!?"

"Wait, what the heck are you saying?"

"Don't you know? ... I'm honestly praising you. When a monster tamer gets selected, the three initial monsters to choose from are assigned according to their individual aptitude. For a monster of the red dragon class, an apt person doesn't appear even once in a generation."

"... I don't care, I'm not glad to be praised by you! What do you want to say?"

"Fu, fu, such cold words. You — will also become a tamer of this side."

"..."

What did this guy blurt out of nowhere.

"Ha, ha, I'm astonished. Me becoming the colleague of a criminal?"

"Aah, in that case, you can do me a favor and sell me the blood of this chick. To make my monsters even more powerful. Unfortunately, the battle before against the damned dragon was consuming, but I still have more stock of 'Enforce' arranged. How do you think, is it a bad offer?"

"Don't mess with me! I won't consent to what you say, you fool!"

It's obvious that doing that won't benefit me in the least.

Thereupon, the man's face distorted,

"From my point of view, you are hopeless fools...

Being a tamer from the 6th generation, among my peers I'm the one with the fastest success in life — and saying that, it won't hurt you to hear what your senior says.

Believe it or not, like you lot now, I too was once a foolish tamer that performed his duty diligently. So, until you know the inevitability of destiny..."

"... What the heck do you mean by that?"

"You, have you thought about the end of the world?"

The man switched to a serious tone,

"As we are now, humanity will meet its unavoidable destruction. By the hands of the large number of monsters that inundate us from the Netherworld."

"... Heh."

This guy... What's he saying...

When I looked at Zonmi, for some reason she was chewing her lip and her body was trembling.

"She doesn't look like she knows nothing. Monsters have longer lifespans than humans and are more fertile. Because of that, their numbers suffer an explosive increment each year.

If it's like that, they end up having not enough food supplies nor land. If we restricted the traffic on the Gate that connects the Underworld with the human world, there will be an incessant increase of revolts. The cause would be a chronic deficiency of food supply.

Because of the current laws on coming to the human world from the Netherworld, a strict check from the Government is a must. However, that system approaches failure.

Once that happens, humanity will be slaughtered by swarms of monsters."

"..."

"And yet, the current IMA doesn't care about it. Who will mediate between monsters and humans?

... Hah, that was something from the past. To kill or to be killed — humanity**we** can do nothing more!

Right now we are a minority, but those like us that hold dissatisfaction with the current system are steadily increasing.

That's why, by suppressing the monsters, we will build a new order to put them under humanity's total control!

And once we change the laws, we will be in the right!"

"... Is what this guy is saying true?"

With her lips tightly pursed, Zonmi,

"Yeah, surely what he said is something I can't deny... I won't say anything. What Chiharu ought to do? — that, decide it by yourself."

"..."

I wonder what should I do.

What do I want to do?

I came here wanting to save Iris from her trouble.

These evil tamers that slaughtered Iris's clan were unforgivable.

Surely, right now I can't make the proper judgement.

These guys, following their ideas murdered Iris's clan.

Different means, same objective — monster tamers are allies of humanity.

Killing monsters is bad... Have I, who eats meat of cows and pigs, the qualification to say that?

I don't understand, just about anything.

How much the development of an advanced civilization equals the start of a war, isn't that an eternal question rooted in personal values?

No matter how long you think about it, I feel the answer will still be out of reach.

"Chiharu."

Zonmi's dignified voice.

"I won't blame you no matter what you choose. Since from the beginning I came here entrusting my life to you... However, that's not the same as putting my life in the hands of that man. In the case you take that man's side, please pierce my heart right here."

Pointing her umbrella at me, Zonmi said.

I felt as if those eyes pierced me. Zonmi was really serious.

It seems she seriously prefers being killed by me than by this guy.

"Don't mess with me! As if I could do that!..."

As if...

I see, so it's like that. What an easy thing. Since I can't...

I won't kill. I couldn't kill neither Zonmi, Kyouko or Iris.

In that case, I've decided.

From the start I couldn't show hostility towards monsters...

Coexistence.

It may possibly only be lip service. Maybe it's a dream that cannot be realized.

But, why do I have to think about such difficult things?

In the end, that's the only objective I should aim for!

"Sorry about your invaluable suggestion, senpai. I can't agree with your ideas. Monsters... these girls are, to me, precious companions. If I can't understand, convince me until I can... After all, isn't that our job as Monster tamers?"

"Chiharu..."

Astonished by my overly optimistic words, Zonmi revealed admiration in her voice.

"A~ah, even though I troubled myself trying to spare your life. You are a shocking idiot... In that case, as you wish, I'll beat you to death!"

"Senpai, I'm aware it will sound impolite... How slow, you hadn't noticed it before, you idiot!?"

"Keh, what shitty lines you spit!"

The man moved his ring to his mouth and shouted.

"SUMMON — MINOTAUROS."

And, the next instant.

A human-shaped ox-headed giant monster appeared.

This one too... It seems it's the same I saw before on the news.

Its height was at least on the order of ten meters[27], and it clearly gushed out aura. This one is stronger than the squid from before. The axe it held in its hand glittered under the lighting.

"Zonmi... Will you fight it?"

"Of course, I'll protect you even at the cost of my life."

Zonmi strongly nodded.

Aah, in the end, I keep being helped by her. Someday I will repay her with interest.

As if unable to keep watching us, the man's face distorted.

"Ha~ha~ha. What beautiful friendship... It makes me puke. You, don't you realize you've misplaced your priorities? What you should be protecting aren't monsters, but people, don't you understand something like that..."

"... Enough with the chattering. Come at me."

"Hah, I'd have done it even if you didn't say anything!"

The moment the man raised his voice, both of us kicked the ground.

In the vanguard, Zonmi. Without catching attention, Zonmi quickly jumped upon a container and like that flew through the air. She slashed at the Minotauros with ferocious speed.

Zonmi was strong.

That's something I understand better than others.

I dare say, battling on the ground no one can defeat her.

That's — what I thought.

"GROAAAAAAR"

Letting out a weird sound, it swung its axe downwards.

Something astonishing occurred. Though the slash wasn't a direct hit, with only the wind pressure, Zonmi's body was sent flying.

"... Kyah!"

[27] Around 32' 9.7".

After being sent flying high, Zonmi crashed into the ground and coughed blood. Her beautiful silver hair was scattered on the ground.

The man showed a fearless smile.

"I didn't know you were so conceited, expecting to defeat a contracted monster with a stray monster. Are you dumb?"

"..."

That was something I was vaguely aware of.

The other monster was receiving a supply of magic power from his tamer. And we didn't have that. That's to say, a 2 vs. 1 situation. It wasn't a problem of real strength. Even an elementary schooler would realize that it was a clearly overwhelming disadvantage.

"... Please, don't make that face. I haven't lost yet."

Feeling my anxiety, muttered Zonmi as if admonishing me.

"So it's like that. As expected, to win while in this form was really asking for too much."

"Eh..."

What the heck is she saying?

Zonmi, after showing a composed smile — turned into a monster.

A pale face. Murky eyes.

Hanging from its belly, something hard to describe that should not have been on a pretty girl.

Standing there was the transformed into a monster — Zonmi in ghoul form.

"Zonmi, that form..."

"I wanted to defeat him in human form if possible, though... It makes me nervous to show my bowels to a man..."

"..."

As usual, it's something I believe I don't understand well.

Hearing Zonmi's words, the man laughed loudly.

"Ha, ha, ha, ha! That was certainly unexpected. You were a ghoul!? Uwaaaaa, what a shock... Even though it looks like this, for a moment I thought you were a fine woman.

Ghouls are the most unpopular clan amongst monsters. Quite the selection he has made...

No, aren't you uncontracted since you weren't chosen? Gyah, ha, ha, ha, it makes me laugh."

"... Did you only want to say that? Girls don't like men that talk too much.

The man clasped his tongue,

"Sorry, but I'm very popular. Don't lump me with that virgin there!"

The footsteps of the Minotauros echoed along with the jeers of its master.

In contrast with its gigantic frame, its movements were absurdly agile.

Closing the distance with Zonmi in an instant, like a bull in a china shop — as if suiting that idiom[28], it rushed on putting its all into a tackle.

Zonmi reacted by blocking it with the umbrella — but, from the start, their physiques were too different.

Zonmi couldn't help but be slowly dragged down as her shoes wore away.

"Chiharu is... surely a perverted serial adulterer indecisive quick to run away useless man. But he didn't call me "disgusting". On the contrary, on our first meeting he lent me clothes... They were tattered, but I was happy. Since our clan has been persecuted a long time due to our looks."

Zonmi was recounting in detail as if reaffirming her decision.

"Hah, what was that!? A self-appointed death flag[29]."

"Chiharu is a thousand times cooler than you!"

Following through with the umbrella by putting all her strength into both hands, Zonmi finally repelled the Minotauros's big frame.

[28] The original idiom was 猪突猛進, that means some by the likes "proceeding like a boar's fierce charge" or "acting recklessly"; it gets even more suitable in english since, well, he IS a bull.
[29] As in the typical "Today is my last day, I'm retiring tomorrow" said by an old policeman as he shows photos of his kids/grandkids.

"Tche, shit!"

THUMP, stopping once more the axe that was swung down, after that the other party couldn't pull off the same level of offense and defense.

They were on par... No, we were a little better.

Despite the axe's greater offensive power, Zonmi was unscathed, and her strikes were solid hits to her opponent. The transformed Zonmi's increased agility was more skillful than before. The decisive slashes aimed at the center of its legs and loins little by little dulled the Minotauros's speed.

"Amazing..."

I couldn't help but let out a word of admiration. Our relationship wasn't superficial. Even if we weren't contracted, the Zonmi that treated me as an equal was strong, and above all beautiful.

As if flustered by the unexpectedly hard battle, the man's features were shrouded in unrest.

"Haaaah!"

Drawing a beautiful arc in midair by making half a turn, Zonmi thrust like that her umbrella into the eye of the Minotauros.

A satisfactory hit. "Groaaaar", letting out a shriek that seemed to shake the earth, the Minotauros rolled on the ground.

"... Hah. You are useless, having so much trouble against a stray. I'll cull you later."

"Next is your turn, even if I'm fighting a human, I won't hold back."

The man, being pointed at with the umbrella, scratched his head,

"A~ah, I didn't want to use it on this guy if possible, but... 'BOOST'!"

The instant he chanted that, the man's body emitted a pale light that flowed into the body of the Minotauros.

Thereupon, something unbelievable happened. The injured body healed in the blink of an eye, swelling — from the muscle covered Minotauros, white smoke was raising.

Even an amateur like me could understand what had happened — the man had bestowed magic power onto the Minotauros.

"GROAAAAAR"

The blow the Minotauros tossed after standing up in a flash, contained a power incomparable to before receiving magic power.

"Kyau"

She blocked the attack with the umbrella, but Zonmi's body was forcibly sent flying.

Crashing into a container, the lemons inside fell out.

"Look! This is the difference between having a contract or not! An overwhelming advantage impossible to overturn!"

"Zonmi!"

I rushed with full speed to Zonmi's side.

... But.

THUD, THUD, THUD!

Earth-shaking crazy sounds. They were the Minotauros's footsteps.

The Minotauros rushed in pursuit before I could arrive.

"Hya, ha, ha, ha, ha! Good, end her♪"

"GROAAAAAR"

At Zonmi who was defenseless right after taking that damage, slashing with that huge lump of iron,

Zonmi's body was turned into a pulp and scattered around.

The surrounding lemons were painted red with the splattered blood.

"It's..."

"Not yet! If you give them a rest, ghouls are a clan that excel in regeneration. Keep at it until its magic power runs out!"

Twice, thrice, four times, the giant axe kept falling intermittently without rest. Due to the next attack coming before managing to regenerate her body, recovery was impossible. Each time an attack came, Zonmi's death agony was heard.

"... Escape... Chiharu."

Zonmi frailly leaked those words.

"Moron! I can't do something like that!"

What's this fellow saying now that we've reached this point...

She wanted to harshly preach to me about resolution... And at the crucial moment she sacrificed herself. Is it to save me? What a damned fool!

"What are you doing... Hurry... Escape..."

"Stop joking! I definitely won't allow that!"

Putting my thoughts into words, Zonmi showed a faint smile.

"With that... Do you intend to shame me?... If I let my master die, what the heck will I do?... *Cough*"

As the axe was ruthlessly swung downwards, it resounded with a shriek like that of a smashed frog.

"Gya, ha, ha, ha, ha! Did you think I'd read the mood like in a manga, stupid!? And so ends a make-believe unbeatable friendship. Die without leaving behind any last words, you bastard!"

"Ku..."

Instantly, I turned around and ran with all my might.

"... I see, that's fine."

"He, he, Seeeerves you right! The man leaves you behind and escapes! After all, your bonds only reached that extent! And you, don't think you can escape. Since I'll soon chase and kill you!"

Ignoring the man's words that hurt my ears, I dashed with all my might.

Of course, I wasn't abandoning Zonmi, hurt before my eyes, and escaping.

Just a slim possibility — I was betting everything on that.

While hidden by the shadow of containers, my goal was the place where Iris was held. Since luckily there was no one near Iris, I managed to reach her without the man noticing.

"Hey, Iris! You all right?!"

When she heard, Iris made a surprised face.

"Foolish one... Why hast thou come here? Thou shouldst be helping that ghoul woman."

"About that, we're in a pinch! Cooperate, Iris, we need your strength."

"... That I cannot do."

"Why!?"

Iris feebly laughed,

"Canst not thou understand by seeing my state? Deplorably, I am not in a state to lend you my strength; I cannot even move one step from here. It seems that this annoying rope has the effect of absorbing magic power. Escaping is impossible."

"Heh, this thing..."

I bit into the ropes with vigor.

It seems that in order to bite off a thick thread the size of an ehoumaki[30] will take quite a while.

"Say, art thou a fool?... As if this rope is a good that could be broken by something like a human..."

"Like this, it will come loose."

"I do not understand. How canst thou be so sure?"

"... It's due to family circumstances. My specialty is getting out of bindings. Don't underestimate my teeth, recently I even bit through the chain of a pair of handcuffs."

Good grief, I don't understand what's with this world. I didn't think the day would come that this skill was useful outside my house.

"... Incomprehensible. If thou runnest away now thou canst save thy life, why art thou not doing so? Don't tell me... Tho-thou hast become enamoured with that girl?"

"Idiot. It's not like that!"

[30] http://japanesefooddictionary.blogspot.com.es/2012/02/ehomaki.html

"Hyau!"

Iris let out a cute yell when I poked her forehead.

"... I can't escape. If I flee now, both Zonmi and Iris will die. I can't allow that."

Iris raised her eyebrows in surprise.

"Why hast thou included my name there... I forcibly made a contract with thee disregarding thy volition. And not only that, I injured and restrained thee. Thou dost not have any obligation to save me."

"Like I care. Since I want to save you, I'll save you — simply that."

"I do not understand thy reasoning. Why dost thou not explain it better to me so that I understand!?"

Iris told me by raising her voice.

"You, didn't you feel lonely in that room?"

"... Haah? Art, art thou slandering me!?"

Now I understand — Iris said that both her parents were killed by monster tamers.

The gentleness she sometimes shows, most likely stems from her solitude.

Iris... with that small body, without having any family around her... That, it was no different from unreasonable isolation. Though she behaved as if she were stout-hearted, she had a gap inside her heart... It seems it's in my nature that I can't abandon people like that.

"Look, it's undone."

Steadily chewing at the ropes while talking, I finally succeeded in releasing her from her bindings. I mean, what's this rope made from? As expected, my jaw was tired... I can't use it for a while.

"..."

Iris was speechless.

Strange. I thought she'd be happier.

"What I am going to say will sound unrefined, but... Right now, I do not think I will be of any assistance in the fray. As thou knowest, these ropes are able to absorb magic power. The me right now, sincerely speaking, can only barely remain standing... That is why, harborest not many hopes."

What, it's that? Then I don't have to worry.

"No, being like this at this time, perhaps our victory is settled."

"What dost thou mean?"

Nearing my ring to my mouth,

"BOOST!"

I chanted with a loud voice.

That instant, I fell into a state that felt as though all the energy of my body had left me.

A feeling of accomplishment as if scattered pieces suddenly fit together to a T.

With this... it's our complete victory!

"This is..."

The red light that covered her whole body was healing Iris's injuries.

And in my case, I was subjected to a tiredness as if I had swum in a pool for a day.

I understood the reason why that man hesitated to employ this power. This was horribly painful, I was already wobbling on my feet. As if I has used all my MP in a Magic Burst[31].

"I'm astonished. To think thou hast this plentifulness of magic power dwelling inside thy body... I finally comprehend the reason why thou wast fit to elect me."

"He, he, thanks a lot."

Of course I was glad to be praised by a girl...

"I give thee my thanks, tamer. And I swear to thee. I will accomplish without fail the duty thou hast entrusted to me."

The voice of Iris, who had turned into a dragon, had recovered her usual self-confidence. Spreading her steel-like wings, Iris promptly took flight towards the man.

Giving a whipping to my exhausted body, I too followed there.

Please, let us make it in time...

[31] Recurring spell on Dragon Quest that converts all remaining MP into damage.

Once I arrived near the man, I became speechless.

"Uwaaaaaaaaa, don't comeeeeeee!"

Minotauros's whole body scorched, only the man's scream resounded on the room.

"Is that the only thing thou wishest to say? I am desolated, but also cannot read the mood; I will quickly bring this to an end."

"Kuh, Stooooop!"

His expression distorted by despair and anguish, the man lowered his head and pleaded for his life.

"Please! I beg you! At least spare my life! It's as you see!"

Iris, sending a fleeting glance of awareness my way,

"... In that case, start by freeing all monsters thou hast put under 'Enforce'."

"Un-understood! I'll free them!"

The man removed a black ring from his hand while he crawled on the ground, and threw it away with an anguished face.

While grinding her teeth out of vexation, Iris gazed at the man's profile seemingly silent,

"... Disappear from my sight!"

She spat out those unexpected words.

As soon as he heard that, the man turned around and scampered at full throttle.

That was — a really quick curtain close.

Since this red dragon girl alone, confronting the seemingly strong foes of the Minotauros and its tamer, totally kicked their butts.

Nevertheless...

"Are you OK with that? That he escaped in the end?"

Iris laughed fearlessly,

"... Humph. I thought that it would be all right if this time I limited it to a warning and let him go free. Since had I killed that bloke, my purpose would have remained unfulfilled. At best, hereafter, I can use him as a valuable source of information."

"..."

Despite Iris having said that. I couldn't help but feel that she had some other reason.

Perhaps this is no more than mere speculation.

It may be that Iris didn't want to burden me with the crime of murder.

Even if indirectly, if she had taken the life of a person, from tomorrow on I'd have to live with the burden of that crime.

To a mere high school student like me, that's undoubtedly an unreasonably difficult thing.

"Thank you. Iris."

"... Come, now, I know not what thou meanest... Thou hast better hasten to that girl's side. I hold no doubt that even now she is surely waiting for thine arrival."

"... Aah."

Anyhow, each second is precious.

Being told by Iris, I started to run without minding my surroundings.

However. At the point I ran to awaited a despair that made me want to cover my eyes.

What was there was a lump of flesh smashed to a pulp.

A thing that barely retained human form, vestiges of Zonmi that it had been were nowhere to be found. The torn up mincemeat-like face of Zonmi showed an unsightly involuntary smile, and not even a bit of regeneration could be felt.

...

...

Why?

Why, oh, why?...

"Uwaaa

"What art thou saying, thou hast accomplished everything. That lass is still alive."

"... What do you mean, Zonmi shouldn't be like this! Shouldn't she be reverting to how she was!?"

"I do not like to jest — the soul of that lass is still here... But then, her current condition should not last long."

Next instant, I noticed some discomfort in my own fingertips.

If I had to liken it to something, it would be close to the feeling you get when you remove the training weights that you had been wearing. She smoothly removed the ring she was so devoted to and fixated on.

"I return thee this!"

What she handed to me was the ring she wore on her finger.

"The ring... Why now..."

"I'm not so uncouth to remain in this place. So, pardon me."

"..."

What the heck... does she means by that?...

To further my dumbfoundedness, Iris showed me a 'don't worry' smile.

"Whaat, thou wilst understand soon. Good grief... Thy resilience is astounding. It seems that nearly half the magic power thou spent earlier has been returned by now. Being like that, there's no need to bestow onto thee the magic power contained in my blood."

"That's why, what do you mean..."

"Let me tell thee one last thing, I am grateful from the bottom of my heart for having met thee... If thou still carriest the will to be a monster tamer, the day may come that we will meet again.

Come the time... If thou choosest to allow it... I wish that we will once again restore our contract.

And this time not by force, I want us to be partners that understand each other by heart. Like with this lass here... Farewell, tamer."

Iris changed to dragon shape and flew away by flapping her wings.

I couldn't discern Iris's dragon-changed silhouette, but the words she left behind in the end were still fresh in my mind.

I wonder what she wanted, after all.

... And.

The ring I received from Iris, I felt it was casting a pale light in Zonmi's direction.

"!?"

Like running electricity, an idea crossed my mind.

I gently approached the ring to Zonmi's hand.

I wonder what will happen — surprisingly, aren't Zonmi's injuries little by little, little by little, healing themselves?

I see... I'm granting her my internal magic power...

Recovering in an eye-blink a healthy rosy color, Zonmi opened her eyelids as if waking up from a thousand years of slumber.

"Mmm, eh... Chiharu..."

Hearing the voice I yearned for, the corners of my eyes involuntarily heated up.

"What the heck... Was I..."

Surveying restlessly her surroundings with half-asleep eyes, it seems Zonmi still couldn't get a grasp of what was happening.

"Welcome back, Zonmi."

Softly raising Zonmi's body, which had become so unbearably dear to me...

"Wha-wha-wha-what are you doing!?"

"It's fine, be quiet for a bit."

I tightly embraced her.

Epilogue - After this and that

The duty of a student is not battling a mysterious organization. Of course, studies come first.

After that. Two days have passed since that incident.

As Seiran Academy started its lessons once again, little by little we retrieved our original lifestyle. I can only say this now, but it's not bad to occasionally receive boring lessons.

Is this enjoying a peaceful lifestyle? After being put through such a dramatic experience, I feel it made me start to understand what the really important things are.

Now, the school building was half destroyed when Zonmi and Kyouko ran amok, but surprisingly there wasn't any retaliation for it after that.

Probably the IMA — or rather Luka-san, arranged something in secret.

If it's like that, it seems I have something to object to about the quality of Seiran Academy regarding its pupils.

Seems like there's no one who would demand the expulsion of two pretty girls. Since if there was someone, the ratio of male students would end up being excessive.

After school.

I visited the office of the International Monster Association.

"Sorry I called you all of a sudden. I wanted to talk to you tête-à-tête asap."

"No problem. I also wanted to talk to you."

"Oh, my. Could this be mutual love?"

"Won't you soon start talking seriously!?"

"Eh... But my heart isn't ready yet..."

Today marks the Ninth time that Luka-san makes one of her incomprehensible jokes.

As usual, this person is being elusive and aloof.

"Let's put the jokes away. Even so, it's amazing~, you alone caught one of those 'Black Tamer"s guys~"

"That was not my power, but the power of those three."

"Fufu~n."

Am I over-thinking it? It seemed like, for a moment, Luka-san's expression was clouded by a tinge of sorrow.

"Say, would you believe me if I told you something?"

"... What is it?"

"Actually, that those three monsters gathered around you~, it wasn't an accident~ it was all planned by me~. This capable Luka, noticing your talent beforehand, felt that it was a waste that those superior monsters were left over, so she had the sudden impulse of calling them together all at once~."

"... Is that true?"

"Of course it's a lie. LI-E."

"..."

I was deceived.

The moment I go along with her, I end up taking it as true.

"Well, they are ready, the documents."

"Thank you very much."

What Luka-san handed me were the documents needed to become an official monster tamer — I had contacted her beforehand and asked her to get them ready.

This... is what draws the line.

From now on, I'll hold onto those three girls... That's the embodiment of my resolution.

"At any rate, you've grown; I don't recognize you, Chiharu-kun."

"Is that so?"

"Yeah. Frankly, when I first met you I thought you were but a good-for-nothing. Because... You know? The you that time was still hesitant about becoming a tamer."

"Ha, ha... It was like that."

"In fact, what has gotten into you? To willingly become a tamer~"

"It's easy. I want to protect and bring happiness to those girls I met."

"Fu, fu, is it Zonmi-chan? Is it Kyouko-chan? Or Iris-chan?"

"... Everyone. Zonmi, and Kyouko and Iris, I want all of the people involved in this incident to become happy... And, while I'm at it, Manami too."

Wavering for a moment on saying it, I finally added the existence of my little sister.

I was unwilling, but... If it weren't for her, right now maybe I'd still be trapped at Iris's den.

"Oh! Here comes the harem proclamation. You did it! Undress☆useless main character!"

"What kind of main character am I!?"

Sometimes it was difficult to tell the true meaning behind Luka-san's words.

"Hey, hey, By-the-way~, won't you include my name there~?"

"You are able to defend yourself by yourself!"

"Buu, buu. That's discrimination..."

I don't know if she was acting or what, but Luka-san looked like she was pouting.

Practical question, a little something I learned with my experience as a tamer.

This person... For reaaal!

That is, she's called first in the list to become the next Maou.

I don't know if she hides some sort of magic power... If I continue as a tamer, will the day come that I'll surpass her?

× × ×

Once I returned, when I opened my home's door,

PAN! PAN! PAN!

All of a sudden, the loud sound of poppers resounded.

"Onii-chan♪ Congratulations on getting a job~♪"

"Uo!?"

In no time, my sister jumped at my chest.

"... Hey, your breasts are touching me... Move aside."

"They aren't touching you, I'm pressing them."

I've somehow or other heard a line taken from a manga.

"... You guys, are you really blood-related siblings? In spite of that, isn't this somehow indecent?"

"No problem, since the indecent one is only Manami! rather, whoa?..."

The me who has returned home was greeted by an unexpectedly unbelievable scene.

... Perhaps, maybe this is the first time I met all of them at the same time.

The ones that greeted me poppers in hand were the ones at the center of this series of incidents, the monster girls. Zonmi, Kyouko and Iris.

As the three rivals thus gave signs of spending their days peacefully, that would be a touching scene worthy of seeing...

The one who spoiled everything was that fool of my sister.

"I-luv-u Hold!"

"Hey! Stop clinging to me by entwining your legs around my body!"

"...Ng—" "...Ng—"

"Don't look! You guys... Don't look at me with those eyes!"

Iris and Zonmi, to us siblings that were so unashamedly clingy, sent scornful gazes.

"Humph. As expected, humans are foolish beings. To think I had started to get a better opinion of them."

"... How unusual, agreeing with a red dragon. Getting seduced by women's bodies, becoming the Maou is but a pipe dream."

"..."

My value seems to have crashed to the level of Greece's national debt.

"... Fu, fu. I won't hand over my onii-chan to some newcomers."

My sister clung firmly to my body like a koala climbing a tree and let out an evil smile that could only mean 'Just like I planned...!'.

Could this girl possibly... Have done this on purpose?...

"... Well, why are all of you in my house?"

Somehow freeing myself from my sister's restriction, I finally could speak out that doubt.

As Kyouko heard it she wonderfully stuck out her chest,

"This is Haru's becoming a monster tamer commemoration & ghoul's contract celebration"

"... Ah—"

I see, in other words, this is a surprise party?

And, there's still something that doesn't make sense.

"Then, who was the one who suggested it?"

"..." "..." "..."

From the way those three looked each other without even a word, I could naturally deduce the answer.

"... A-as for me I don't mind who was, but, you see, I think it would be unnatural not to since this is of course a custom of the Netherworld."

"... Re-really?"

I see. It seems it was Zonmi's suggestion, who was more fired up than normal and looked like she was wearing make-up. What's more, she was wearing an excessively gaudy dress bought who-knows-where...

On second thought, we were both wearing matching contract rings.

Somehow or other, this looked like a wedding... It was a little embarrassing.

"Come on, come in quickly. Since we even have expressly ordered a cake for you two."

"... Ou."

Kicking off my shoes, I strode though the entryway's threshold.

My gait felt somewhat lighter than usual, could it be my imagination?

I think I'll talk about what will happen hereafter.

As a newbie tamer, right now I only have one ring assigned, but it seems that when I'm recognized for achievements, if I request to the IMA, from now on I can increase the number.

It seems that in no time, Zonmi, Kyouko, Iris — the day I can contract all three monsters at the same time is not far off.

By the way, additionally.

Luka-san's declaration of going on vacation was utter bullshit, it was instead an excuse for me to go here and there with Zonmi and Kyouko. Could all that unexpectedly be simply a plot of Luka-san whose natural gift was being chaotic?

Good grief, I'm really no match for that person.

"Eeh, why am I made to do this host impersonation?... I'm sincerely reluctant, but... People, let's all have a toast. Ah, Manami-chan stop nonchalantly adding something weird to your brother's glass."

"Tch. That's Kyouko-oneechan for you."

"What are you coming up with this time, you!?"

"Well then, for the plans for my contract with Haru—" "For my marriage with onii-chan—" "For the day my vengeance comes true—"

"""Cheers"""

"Aren't you doing too much as you please, you lot!?"

The person in question, Zonmi, seems like she still hasn't poured her drink.

Of course, as fellow monsters (though Manami is not a monster...), could it be that she's thinking about us all making a contract soon?

However.

Saying this is embarrassing, but... somehow I don't hate this kind of atmosphere of freedom.

Because—

All of them are laughing.

There wasn't even a speck that remained of their former battling from day to day.

All of them were energetically doing as they pleased.

And I... That I wanted to protect those smiles of them forever, that was what I wished from my heart.

"I-it's my once-in-a-lifetime big moment..."

"Ha, ha..."

That one, seems like she has taken quite the shock...

From now on, if I keep being a monster tamer, it seems I'll keep facing big hurdles. Maybe I'll experience unexpected frustration.

But. Even so.

For these girls, I feel I can overcome no matter...

"Hyau!?"

Fshhhhhhhhhhh

Together with a sound like escaping air, Zonmi gave a little shriek.

"Wh-who was it!? The one who shook this PET bottle!? Uuu, for this day... The dress I prepared expressly for this day..."

"Eeeh—, who was indeed—. Manami doesn't kno—w♪ Or, how should I say it, since you planned to seduce onii-chan by wearing those erotic clothes despite being a zombie... Isn't that divine punishment?"

"... Fu, fu, fu. Little sister, today of all days, I won't let it pass. How about I push you before a stray dog stark naked and in tortoise-shell bondage?"

"Kyaah—, I'm scared—. Save me, onii-chan—, the zombie is bullying me—"

"..."

I feel I can overcome any difficulties, but it may be only my imagination.

Author Notes

Nice to meet you.

I'm the one who debuted on the 6th HJ Bunko Grand Prize as Kankitsu Yusura.

Thank you for picking up this book!

Introducing this book without spoiling anything to those who haven't read it yet, in contrast with the serious title (?) this is a slapstick highschool love comedy full of harem ingredients.

Since it was written by an author who loves love comedies, I think readers who love love comedies will be able to enjoy it without fail!

Where did I take the inspiration for this work from?... Maybe the readers with good sense will be able to guess it.

The idea who would become the core of this work came to me while I was incubating a Po·mon egg. I don't know why, but on Po·mon games it exist the custom ritual (?) where you have to choose one from three monsters as a partner, but... I suddenly had a question.

It was 'What will happen to the Po·mon that you didn't choose a partner at the start?'.

The ones you didn't choose, will they spend the rest of their lives shut into Monster ·lls inside the laboratory? Will those which were not chosen reach old age without being able to see the outside world in their lives?...

While thinking those things, that's how this work's early plot was polished.

Good, gracious, I didn't know that an idea could sprout from such a place...

And now, appreciation words.

It's contribution time. To my friend Y-kun who gave me advice on my work.

Thank you for all that.

Especially when at Akihabara's Saizeria Y-kun said of my manuscript (my proud work of art I had spent 3 months in) 'Before interesting or dull, it's inconsistent!', words that even now keep traumatizing me, but I think it was a good feedback.

The same goes to my friend G-kun.

When I mailed you my work and asked for your impressions, although it's a wonder you managed it while your PC wasn't working well, you were busy in real life and your health was poor, I think the advice you gave me is what makes me stand where I am.

Thank you for all that.

To my editor in charge.

Excuse me for all the trouble I always cause you.

I don't know when, but I'm thinking on the way to repay you this debt.

To Shugasuku-san the illustrator.

Thank you very much for the lovely illustrations.

When I received the rough drafts, it surprised me that I unintentionally ended up entranced for 8 hours straight.

And, to the many people involved so far with this work of mine, thank you with all my might...